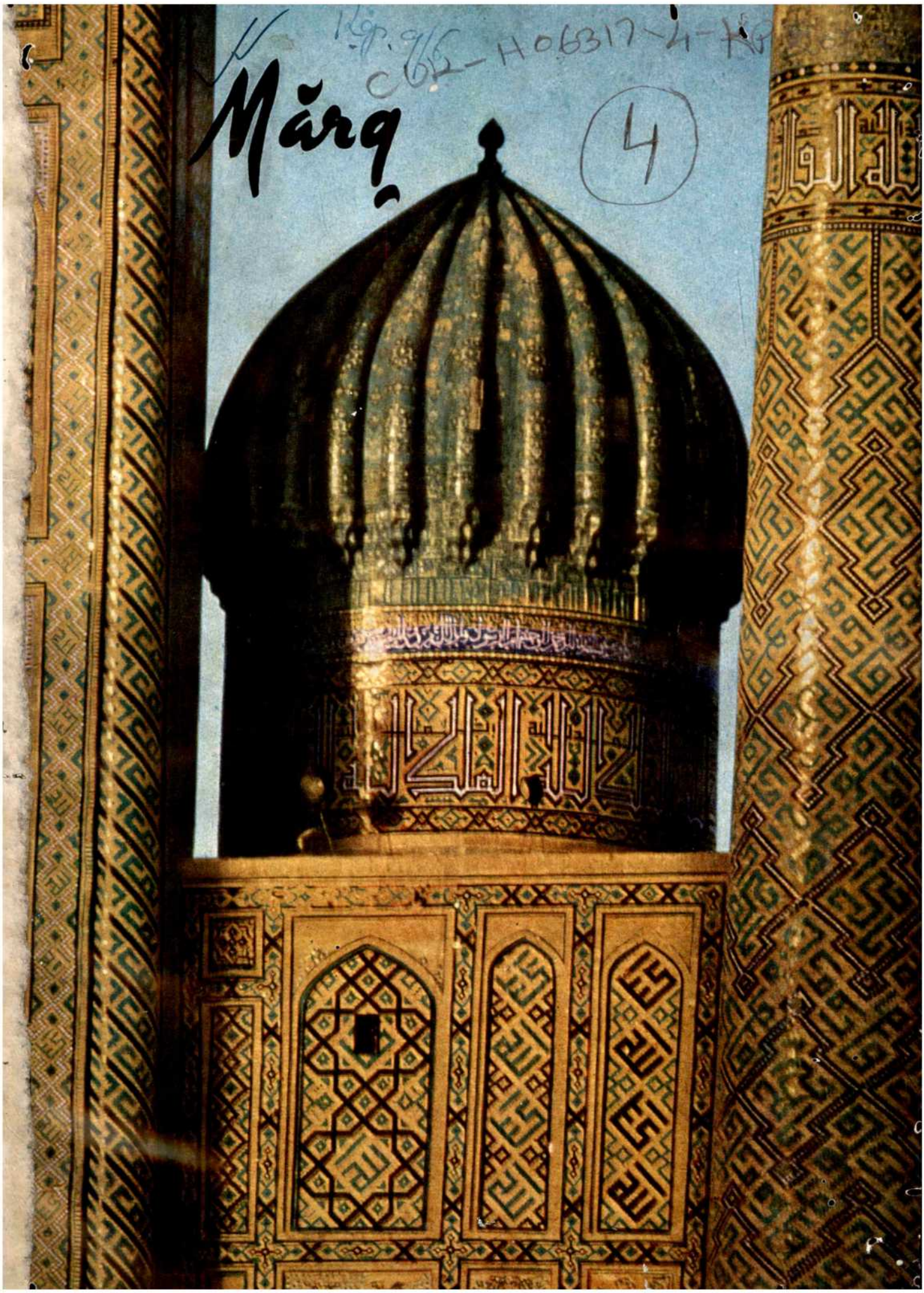
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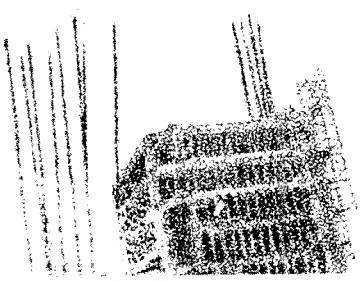

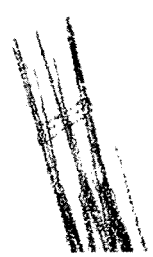

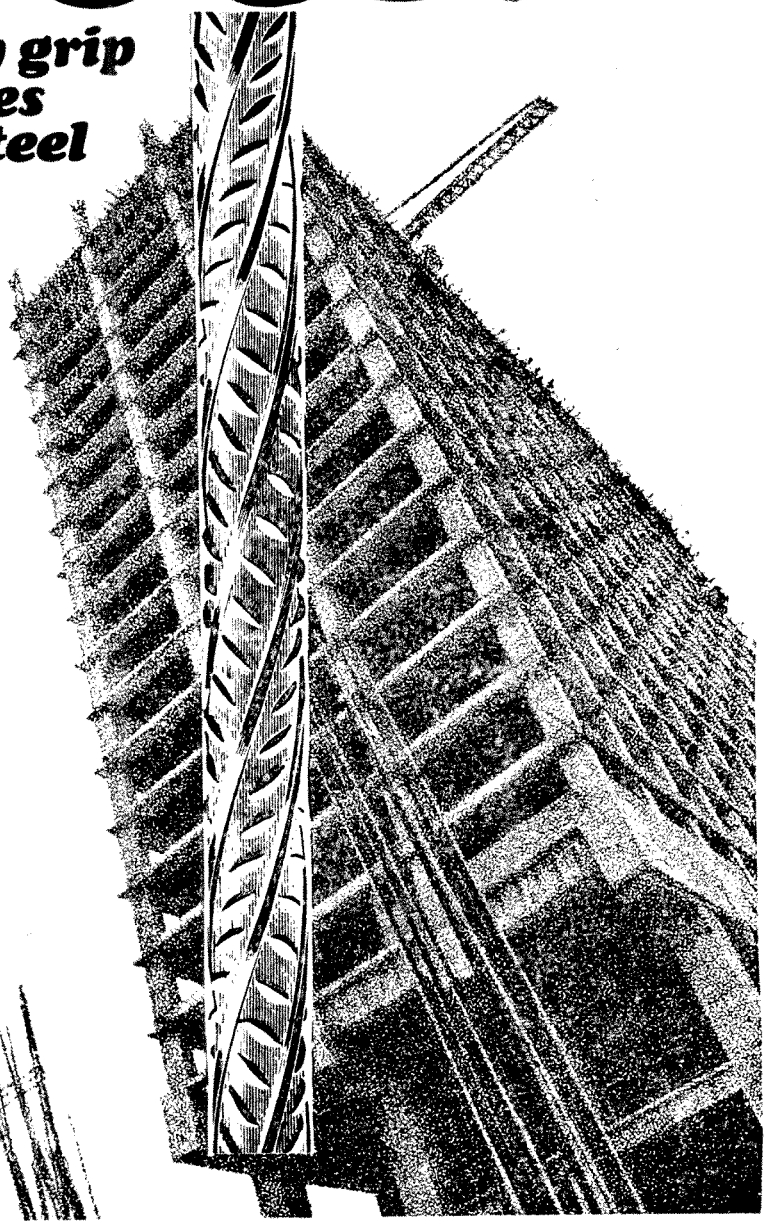

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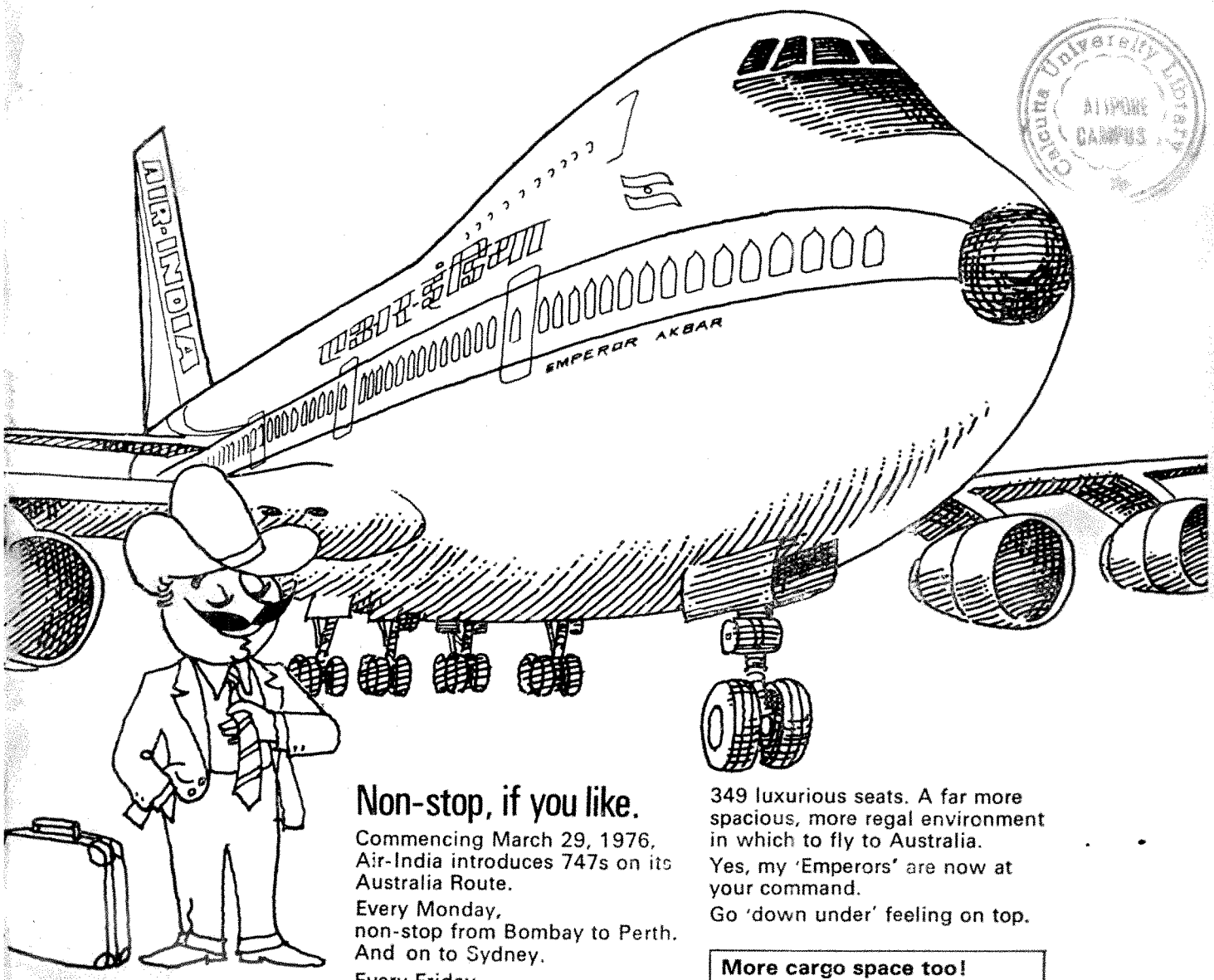

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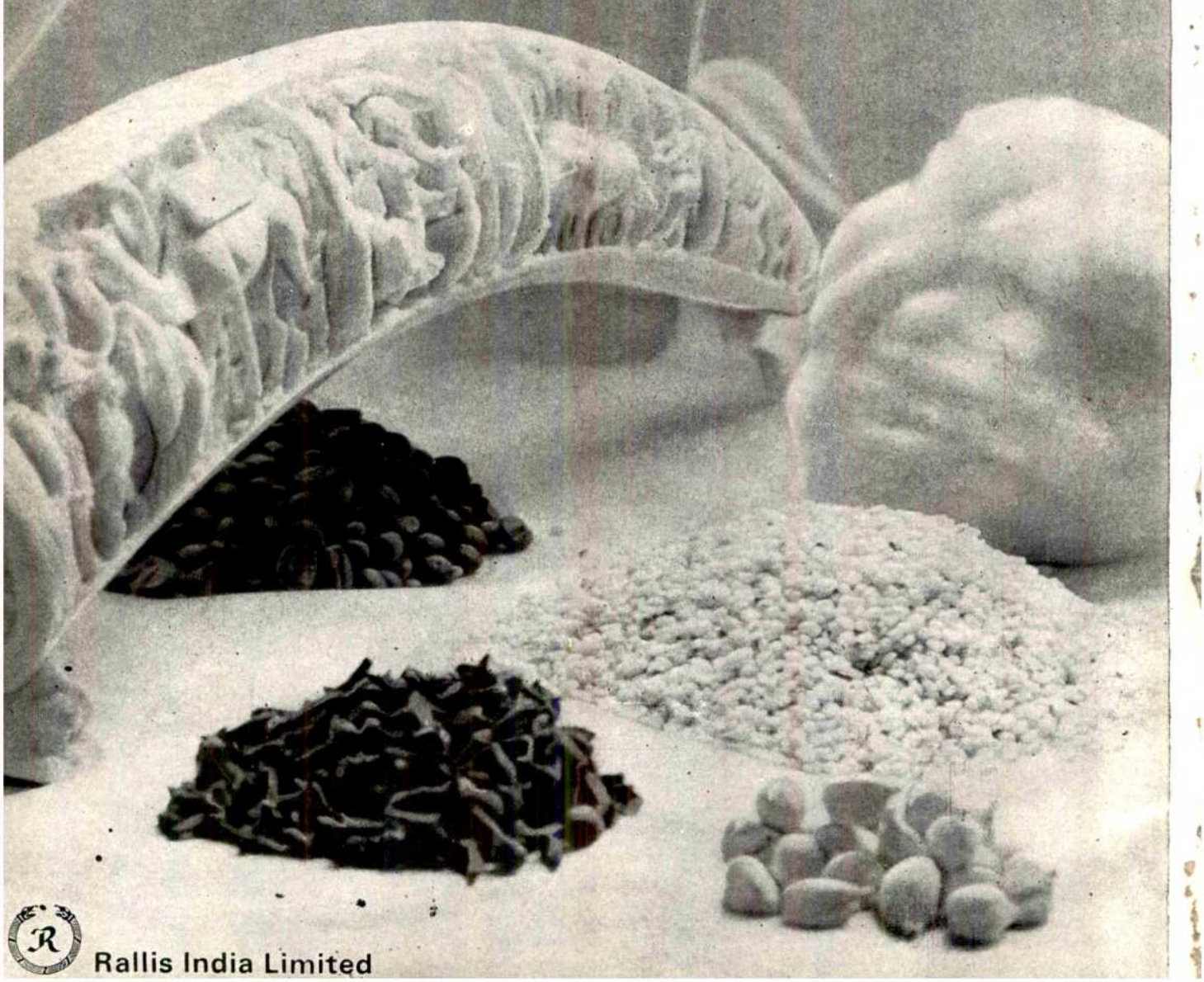

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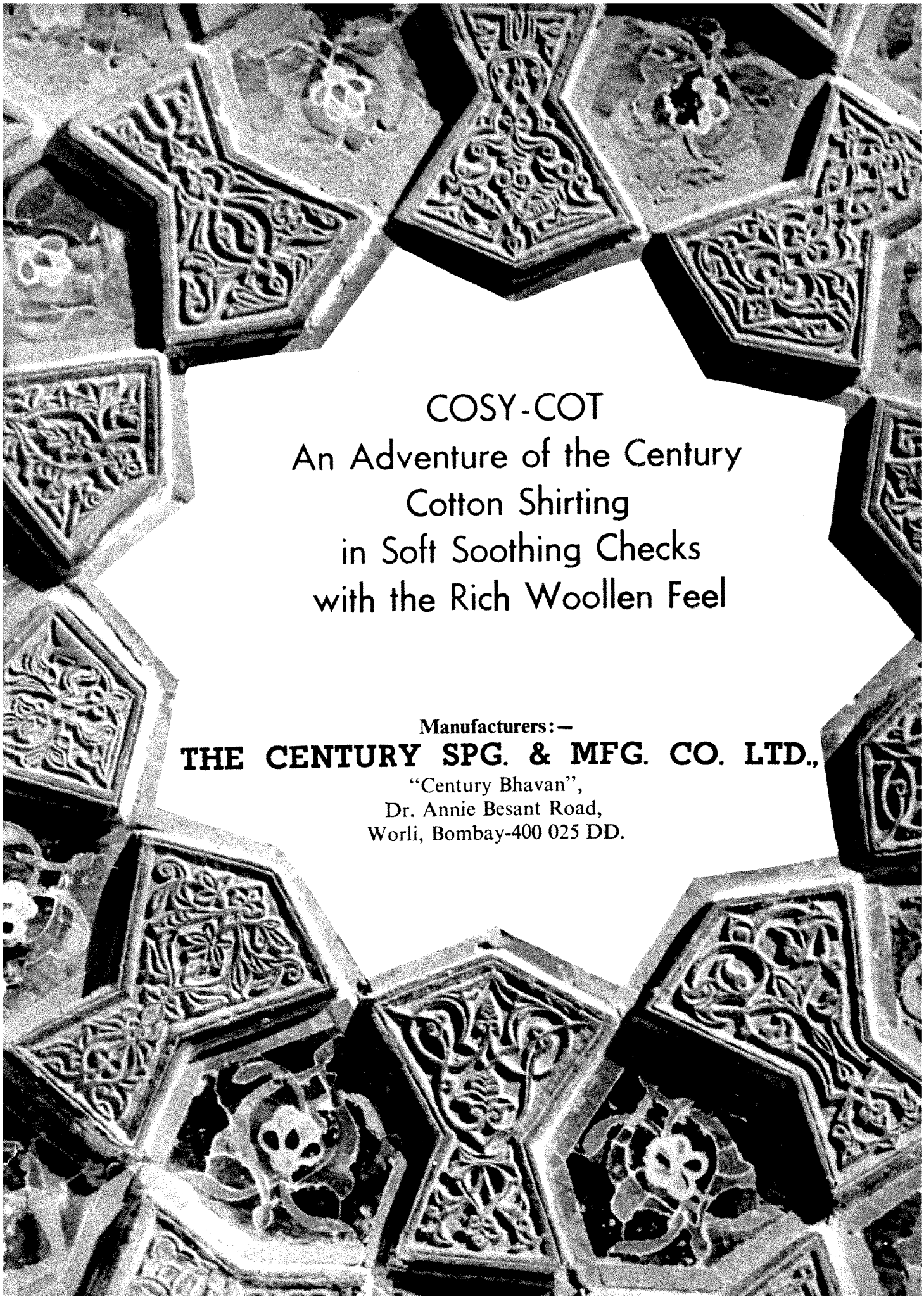
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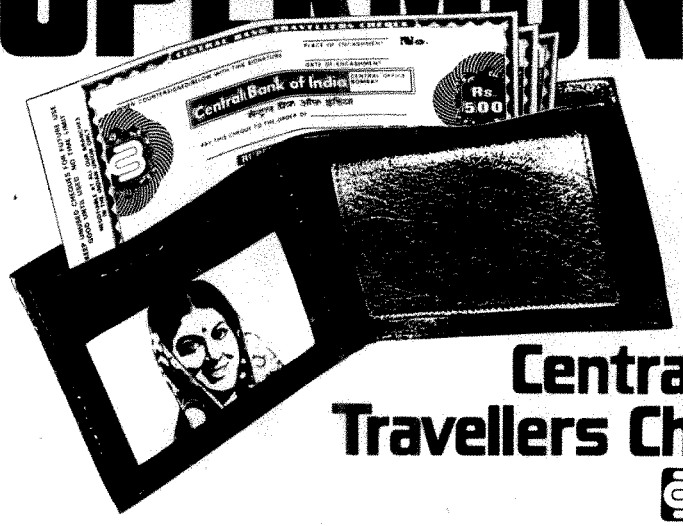

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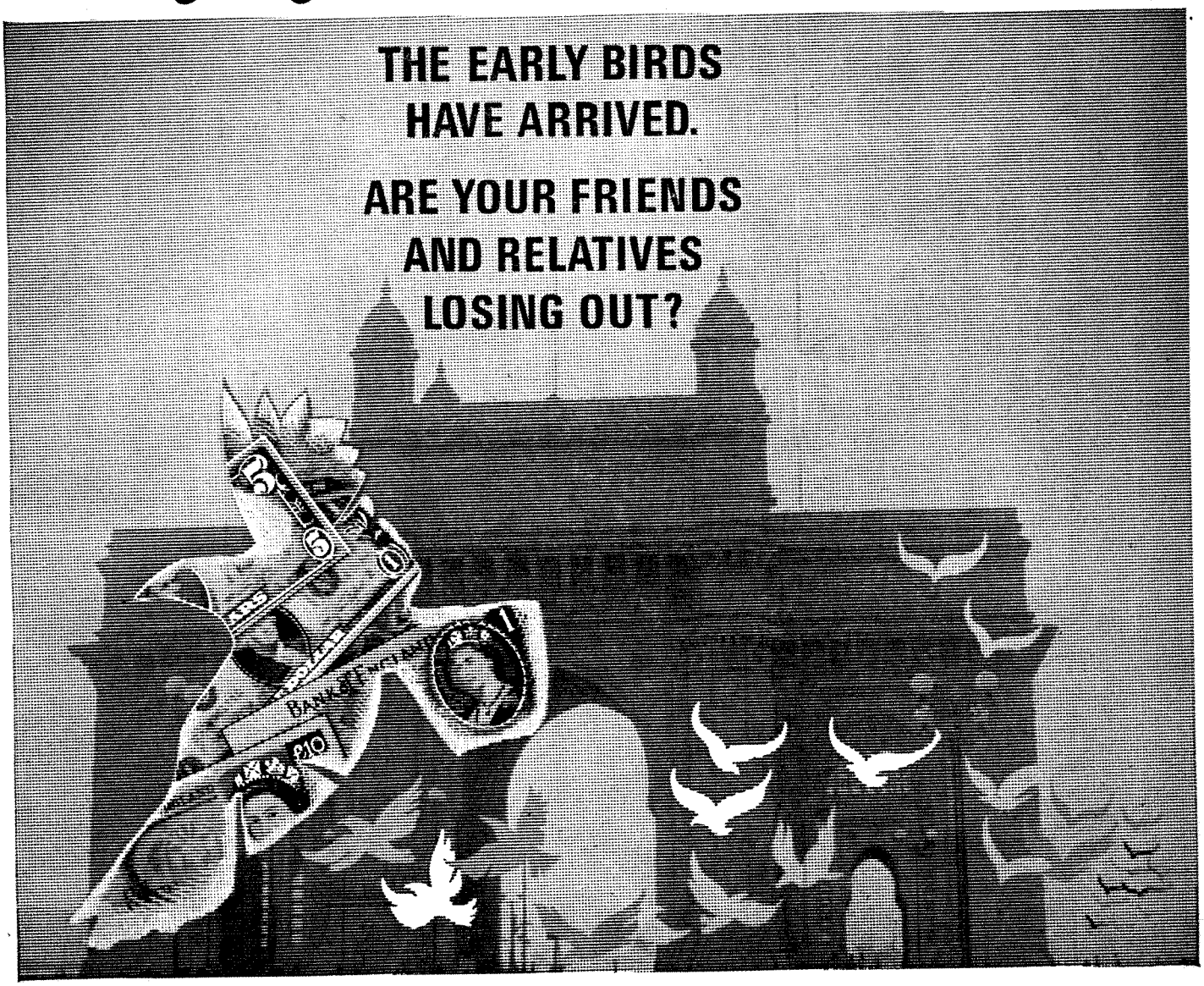

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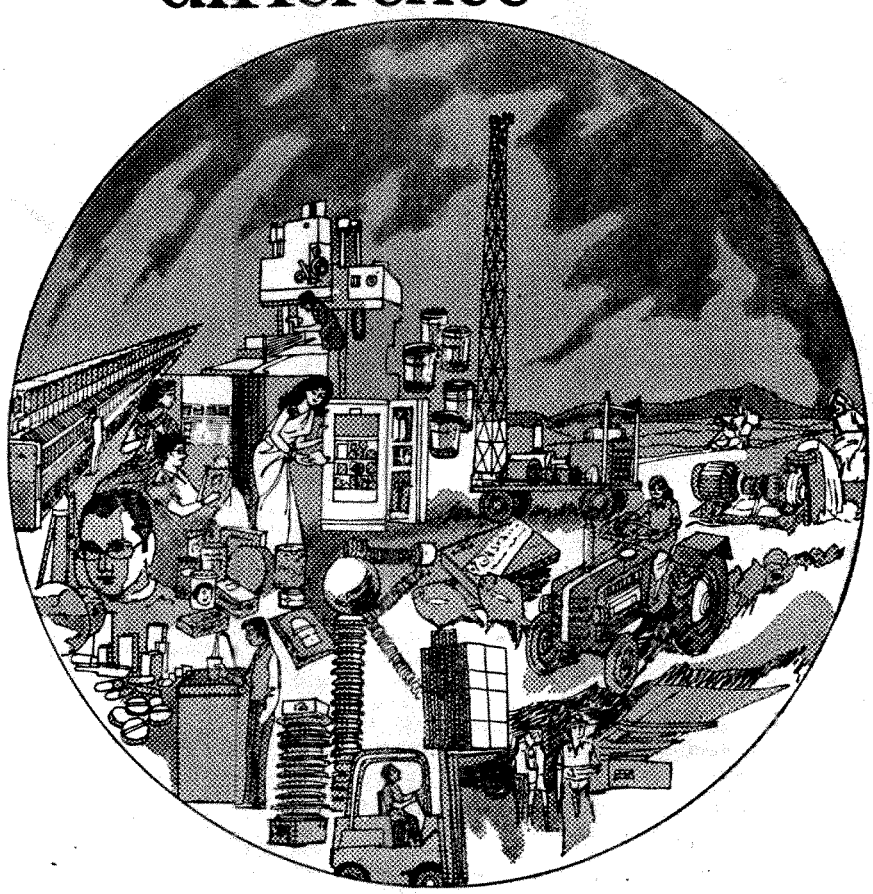

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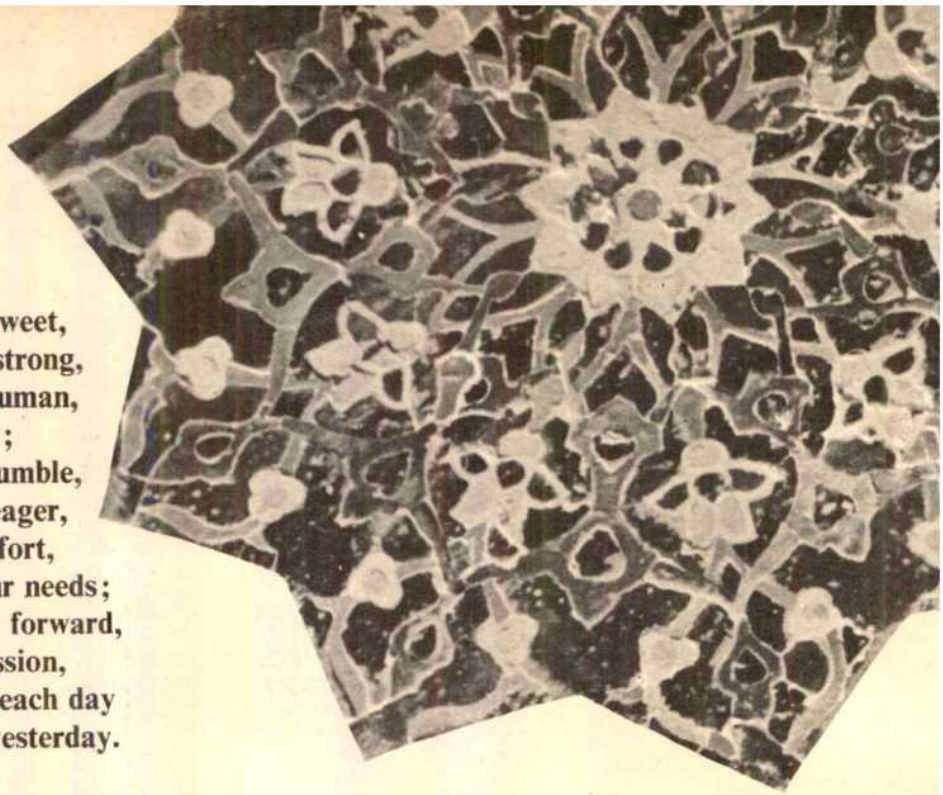

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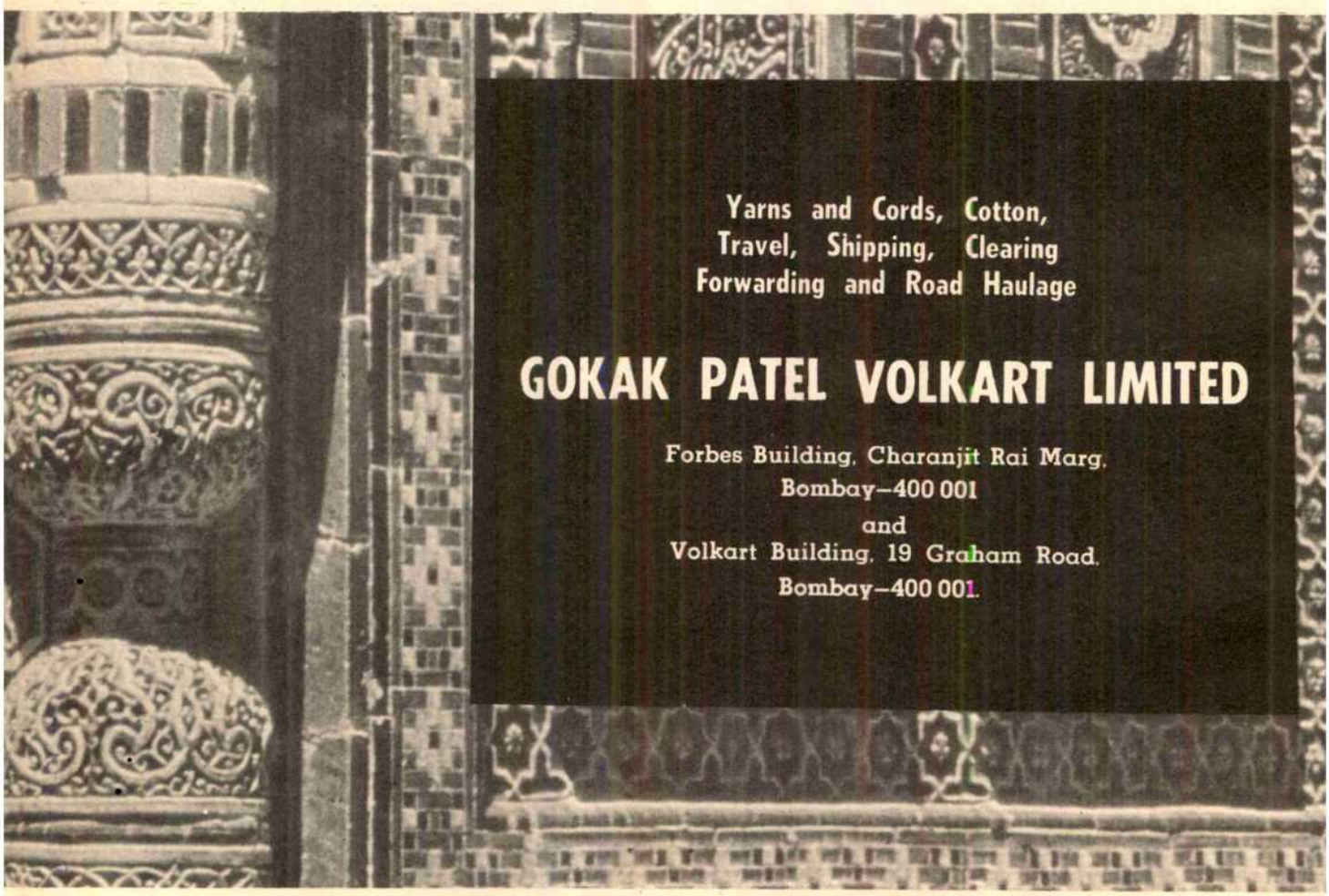

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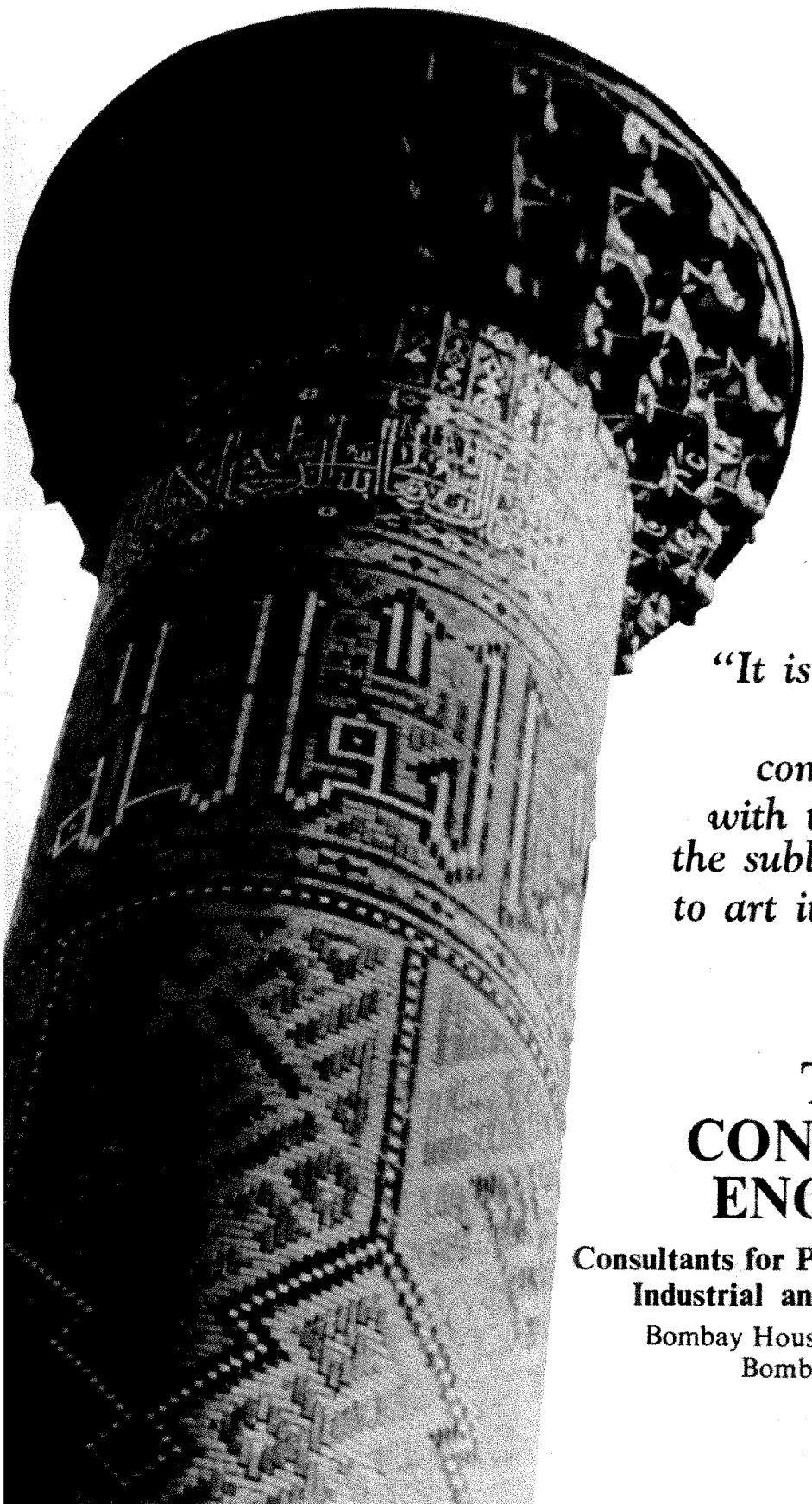

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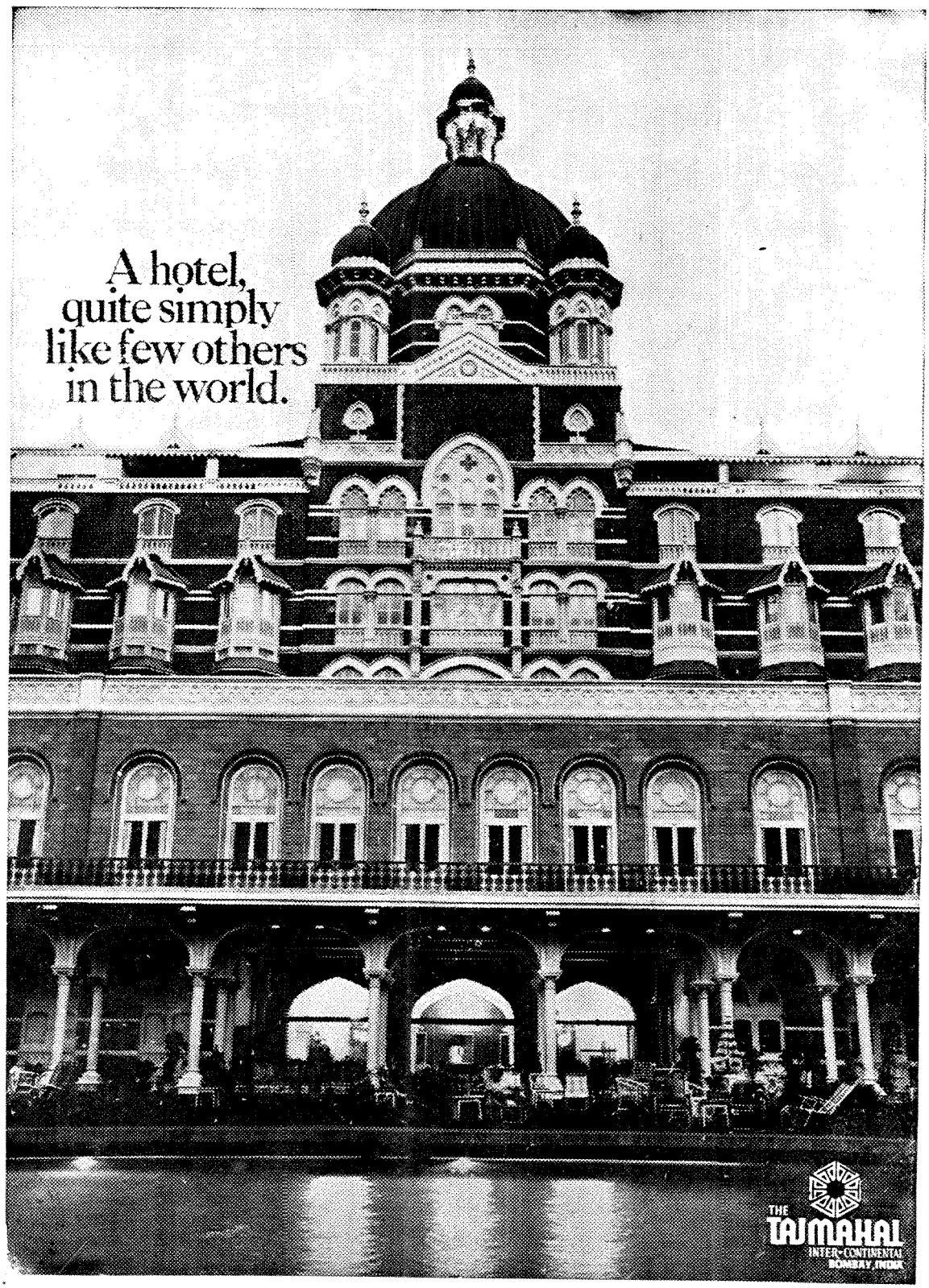
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A Tata Enterprise

VOLUME XXIX
NUMBER 2
MARCH 1976

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by Mulk Raj Anand

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Cover: Detail of Shir Dor dome with the pillar and part of facade.

MARG wishes to acknowledge its debt to the Ministry of Education of the Government of India and the Ministry of Culture of the U.S.S.R., for generously including the research in Samarkand architecture of the Editors of MARG under the Indo-Soviet Cultural exchange programme, in the summer of 1975.

The warm hospitality of the intelligentsia of the Uzbekistan Republic made it possible for us to see every monument, Museum and object of art, in connection with the great tradition of Central Asian architecture in 'the green city'. We owe a special debt to the Academy of Fine Arts, Tashkent, for the loan of documents. To Prof. Pugacinkova, who is responsible for the total information on architecture, our gratitude will remain enshrined in her text. Our young guide, friend and philosopher, Katya Perepolkina conducted us through the arduous journeys with a sense of humour, which showed profound understanding of the eccentricities of scholarship.

The photographs and colour transparencies are by D. H. Sahiar.

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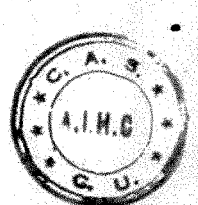

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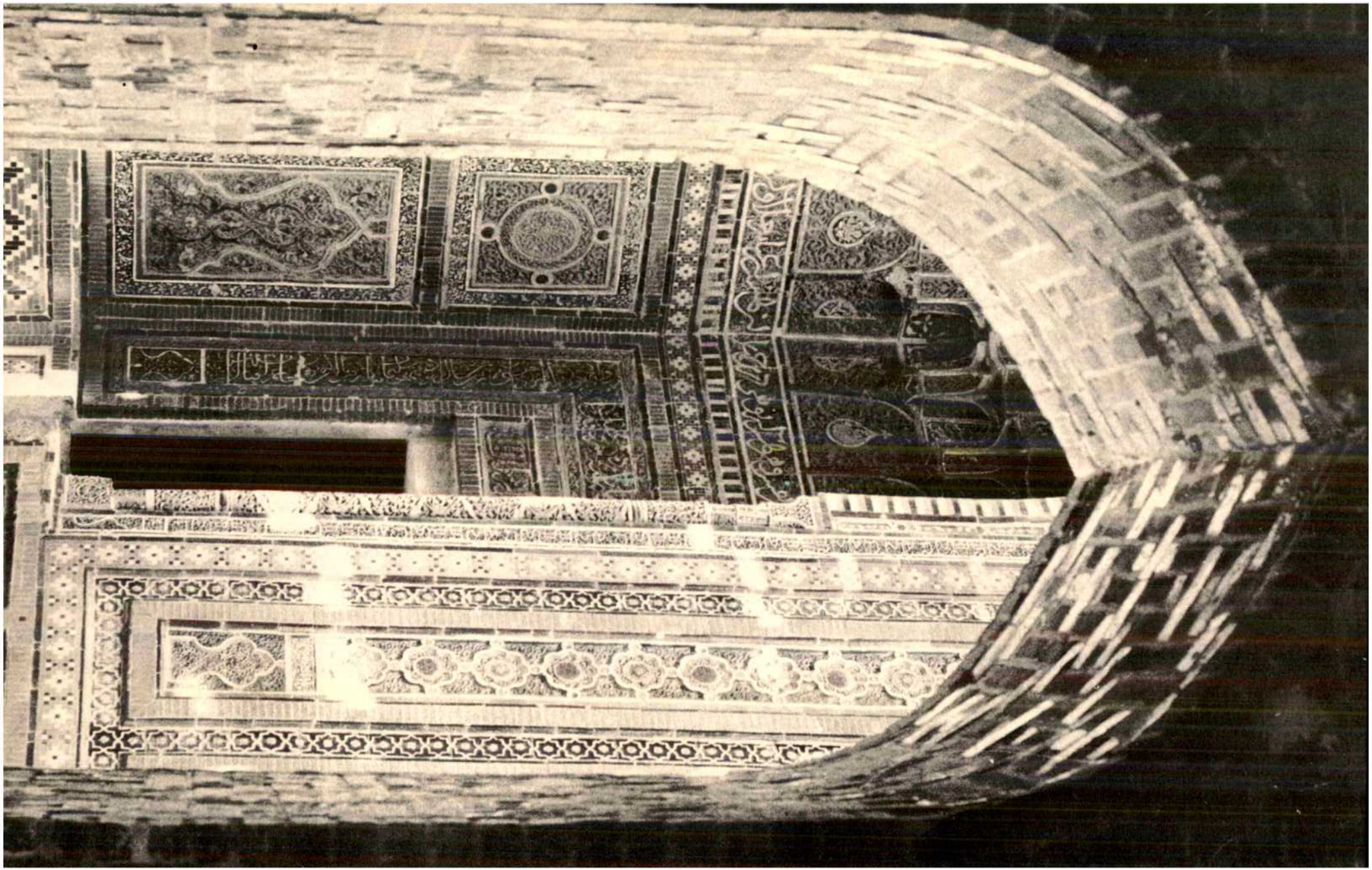
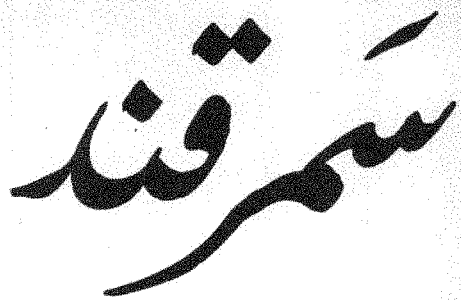


THE GREEN CITY



(1)

Oasis

Out of the vast landmass, from West China through Mongolia to Tranxonia and Khorasan for centuries, we only hear rumours, hearsay, and the gossip of caravanserais. For, in the few oases, amid the desert sands, by the rivers, the caravans rested on their way from nowhere to nowhere, to rest their ponies, mules, donkeys, camels, sheep and goats. The scorching sun of the hours, after dawn to dusk, took everything out of human beings, to the last ounce of energy. From the midst of the blinding glare suddenly came duststorms, spirals of revolving winds were always confronting the travellers with what they thought were the jinns. The cool breeze of the evenings and the mornings was utilised for travel, to transport merchandise of wool and skins and carpets, to distant markets, in exchange for food and water.

'Samarya' 'Samarkans' Semizkent' 'Samarkand'

Samarkand (deriving its name from King Samar, or from the Sanskrit 'Samarya' meaning assembly, called by the Greeks 'Samarkans', and by the Turks 'Semizkent'—fat settlement), on the banks of the Afrasian river always remained an important oasis in the desert.

Ever-hungry Tribes

Sometimes the chiefs, tired of nomadic existence made forage raids on the nearby oasis, organised the ever-hungry tribesmen and launched out, by night marches, into the towns on the banks of the rivers, and even beyond to the fertile plains, down south, beyond the Pamirs, and to the valleys of the Caucasus mountains, or into the fruit orchards in the midst of the Hindukush ranges.

Surprisingly some of the most hardy and courageous people, who later prevailed on the world, emerged out of Central Asia, constantly battling against their bare landscape, seeking to grow beyond barbarism to civilisation, in fighting for survival, on scarce means of subsistence, perenially restless.

One against all and the rest divided

The renewal of the feudal nomadic societies could never be possible because of the non-development of the means of production. It was easier to loot under a chieftain. But the chief was against all. And all were against the chief, unless they were fed. And then the one joined the four others to keep control of the irregulars. The four sometimes became forty. Then they divided into twos and threes against the rest. And the rest were against the rest.

Bronze age about 2000 B.C.

This was so, from the bronze age, about 2000 B.C., when men learnt in the Caucasus to mix one part tin with ten parts of copper to make bronze.

Pastoral Agricultural Society

The ruins of Anka-kala, Teshik Kala and Janbas Kala evidence this fact. These people lived a mostly pastoral life, with some agriculture. And they evolved a matriarchal society. The remains of their coloured and engraved pottery are gay.

Andronian Culture 1700 B.C.-1200 B.C.

Karasuk Culture 1200 B.C.-800 B.C.

About the end of the 2nd millennium before Christ, around the Altai mountains in the land of the seven rivers, flourished the Andronian bronze culture, between 1700 B.C. to 1200 B.C., from the Yesesi stream to the Urals. The clay vessels found here have geometrical designs. A similar Karasuk culture seems to have grown out of the previous Androniya, between 1200 B.C. and 800 B.C. Then there was a Minusin culture in north-east Central Asia, with contacts with the Khakasi people near lake Biakal.

(2)

The Scythians

Already, as these strains were dying out, there is evidence of the rise of the Scythians in the north. These tribes mingled with the Indo-European race on the one hand, and the Munda Dravid race of Sinkiang to the north.

Aryans 3rd millennium before Christ

Contemporary with them were Aryans, in lower Ukraine and in the Caucasus, who had emerged by the 3rd millennium before Christ.

Their movements were spasmodic. The fusions were fare. The families, groups and tribes, depended on the will of their gods to give them blessings of plenty, as well as victory over the foes.

The early hymns of the Vedic Aryans are naive, childlike prayers, which invoke the nature gods, the sun, the sky, the thunder and the dawn to come and help them.

In the midst of the many uncertainties of adventure, battle, loot and rough justice, sometimes was heard the voice of a poet-prophet.

Zarathustra

About the same time as the migration of the Aryans began, Zarathustra is said to have uttered profound words. He preached the worship of the elements, the sun, the moon, the earth, and the fire that ignites all life. This message was dimly grasped by the semi-conscious herdsmen, drunk on the stupor of fatigue, and they worshipped the elements murmuring, *Yatha Ahuramazda.*

Mani

Some centuries later, spoke Mani, who also emphasised the fundamentals, contrasting the light and the dark, the good and the evil, and he painted pictures of the nuances and vibrations of the soul, of the movement of space and time and colour, so that, through the images realised from the memory of vision seen, the people may get indirect apperceptions and see god behind all things. The unseeing chieftains saw dangers in the meditations of Mani. Prayer was a hindrance to going ahead and capturing other man's lands and they murdered the prophet.

Scythian gold work 8th and 7th centuries B.C.

The Scythians discovered gold. But, until the 8th and 7th century B.C., they were still using bronze swords, spearheads and arrowheads. Some of the trappings of horses and gold jewellery for personal adornment, shows the development by the Scythians of the finest craftsmanship of the ancient world.

Although these races affected certain crafts they remained basically nomadic.

(3)

In the vast loneliness, the predicament of aloneness continued to challenge man, face to face with the elements and possible death through hunger. The afflictions multiplied daily, and pain was constant.

Gautama 6th century B.C.

In the 6th century B.C. a young man called Gautama renounced the proud life of a prince in the city-state of Kapilavastu and wandered about to brood on human destiny. He argued with the Hindu Brahmins, who believed in a Supreme God. After many austerities, he is said to have gained Enlightenment. And he spoke to the men who were divided on the basis of colour and toil of the head against the hands. He cut across the magic of sonorous words and tried to recover a fundamental innocence, emptiness or the primaeval void of Nirvana, by penetrating the emotions and by struggling against desires which, he said, induced attachment to things. He probed the secrets of the inanimate nature in its relationship with men. And he found life in everything. He sought liberation from the world of habitual craving for existance. The wheel of life must be turned, he said, but vanity must be crushed. *Karuna,* or sympathy, must prevail. Gentleness towards every being, as everything had life.

Silk Road

The monks who were converted from the ruthless caste order of the Hindus to the belief in the evolution of the highest consciousness, and to calm, trudged the highways and byways of northern India, Central Asia and beyond. And, on the Silk Road, wherever possible, they built monasteries, retreats and resting places, from where the drum-beats called people together to hear the healing message.

(4)

Scythian migrations

Before 300 B.C. the Scythians had spread out towards China, the Karakorum mountains, Gilgit and on into the Himalayan valleys, where they came to be known as Khas tribes. They also migrated towards the Jaxartes

river. Another branch found homelands north of Sogarh or Samarkand. One offshoot lived near the Oxus river and called themselves Parthians. They conquered Persia and Greece. Other branches called Wir Sung and Yuchi spread towards the Hwang Ho in China. Being nomads, they left no dwelling places in villages or towns, but their graves in the Altai mountains have yielded a fairly complete idea of their life patterns.

The Huns 300 B.C.

About 300 B.C., another Mongoloid race—the Huns—began to push the Scythians out of their homelands. They invaded China across Mongolia, Manchuria and Siberia. The Chinese called them Hung Nu. They were later to spread out into what is called Turkestan, the Khirgiz country in the East and Hungary in the West.

(5)

Alexander's visitation in 329 B.C.

After his successful campaign upto Samarkand in 329 B.C., Alexander left his Governors to rule the Greek Empire in Central Asia. The Graeco-Bactrian kings ruled the vast land from Samarkand to Khorasan extending their sway to Gandhara which covered Afghanistan and north west India. The fusion of the Greek pagan cult of Apollo with the worship of the Buddha established a mixed syncretic civilisation and checked the forage raids of the Huns for two centuries. The emergence of the Mauryan dynasty in North India remained a barrier to barbaric infiltration into the Ganges delta.

(6)

Chinese dynasties of pre-Christian centuries

Beyond Central Asia, the Huns still flourished in West China becoming the ancestors of Chinese dynasties the Kittans, the Manchus and the Yuchis. They were rough, ruthless people who learnt the technique of war from infancy and were constantly foraging from the desert into the small townships.

Kushans march westwards 2nd-1st centuries B.C.

In the 2nd century B.C., the Kushan branch of the Togoro tribes living among the Yuchis in West China had begun to march westwards. They occupied Bactria, Gandhara and North India upto Mathura. One of their kings Kaniska who consolidated the Kushan Empire with his capitals in Begram, Peshawar and Mathura, was converted to the tenderness of the Buddha under the influence of the poet Ashvagosha.

Magical Beliefs

We do not know to what extent the light which Gautama had brought, spread into the hearts of men. They were much more easily impressed by physical feats, such as the magicians walking on fire. And they had their own good and bad spirits: the ghosts of the elders, whose energies had to be inherited, to give the necessary strength to carry on with the day's travel against the fear of the demons. The tribes had acquired their rule of thumb knowledge about the body and the soul. They knew that physical stamina required conditioning, through eating meat and drinking liquor, to attain the ecstasy of reaching the end of the journey, as well as the much-needed sleep. So they knit their secret rituals into the make-belief of magical worship, of totems and taboos, obscure rituals and Couestic prayers.

Thus the pure doctrine of *Nirvana* of the Buddha had been transformed, apart from the thousands of images of evolutionary Bodhisattavas, or potential Buddhas, across the tracts of Central Asia, into demons and animal spirits and desirable women.

The dialectic of rational thought is always made concrete by partial insights of unconscious minds, whose reactions to the insuperable realities are in the infinite regresses of vision. Oral cultures bring up ghosts of sensations felt in the dark. The child-like hunches mix with mature experience and sometimes confirm the wisdom of the heart in poetry and myth.

Shamanite myth

One of the ancient Shamanite Siberian myths talks of a man flying to the moon. There he meets a woman to whom he makes love. This gives him magical powers. He returns to the earth in an exalted state. And he becomes a demi-god and can change the course of people's lives.

Such primitivist fantasies, presumably generated by the basic urge to fly, symbolise the upward thrust of the soul for freedom from the mundane life. It was, perhaps, the unconscious faith in evolution through natural selection, that often garbed itself in the form of magical ritual.

(7)

After the Kushans had turned westwards, the major Hun factions kept on fighting among each other and with the Chinese.

The Turks The Turks who were their craftsmen slaves, revolted against the Huns and asserted themselves across Central Asia. They remained powerful as long as the first flush of their revolt was in their memories. And even the Chinese dynasties recognised their sovereignty and sent their rulers—Ilkhans—gifts of silk and princesses.

Some of them accepted Buddhism and learnt the ways of civilisation as they spread their Empire from the Altai mountains to the Pacific in the East and Black Sea in the West. But the old want of food and cloth led always to infights. A stone inscription of this period reads as follows:

'Among the Turks one brother fights against another. The son intrigued against the father.' The Huns were generally stupid and cowardly and were looked on with suspicion by the people. The Turks were responsible for their own doing. The remnants of the many nomadic Turkish tribes who gave the entire region its Mongoloid character left their descendants in Khirgistan, Kazekistan and Uzbekistan.

Turkestan The name given to Central Asia before the 7th century, Turkestan was to remain the general pseudonym forever.

(8)

Islamic penetrations 7th century A.D. About the 7th century A.D. the Islamic penetration had begun. The surviving tribes, who lived in the greenery of the desert, mixed in their secret shrines the worship of light with the dark, brooding on their old primitivist obsessions, appeasing the fear of all fears in the mind's darkness.

They worshipped stones, drew pictures on walls and exorcised the interior life in weird practices.

One God without idols In this world of chaos, the Prophet Muhammad came with the pure idea of worship of the One God, as a concept, without the use of idols. Also, he preached the equality of all men, gave dignity to women and promised the ascent to heaven to all those who would say five prayers a day and lead the righteous life.

The legend about his own flight to heaven had been sanctioned by the previous exaltations in the Greek myth of Daedalus, through the old testament legend about Alijah, as also by the story of Jesus who had direct connection with God, his father in the sky.

A universal declaration of human rights The kind of universal declaration of human rights which was Islam, with its laws regulating human behaviour in an order, where the Caliph or head of the faith, would be elected, made an instantaneous impact on everyone who wanted a coherent society.

Influence of Byzantium As Muhammad took much of the wisdom of the Jewish and Christian faiths, as well as from the formalist Byzantine order before him, he and his followers were able to reinforce the basic truths of other faiths. And the organic tradition threw up important leaders from within the fold, generation after generation.

There is no doubt that synchronous action could not be achieved among the many disparate peoples of Arabia without much factional fighting. But the fundamental idea of the One God against the many images had made a lasting impression.

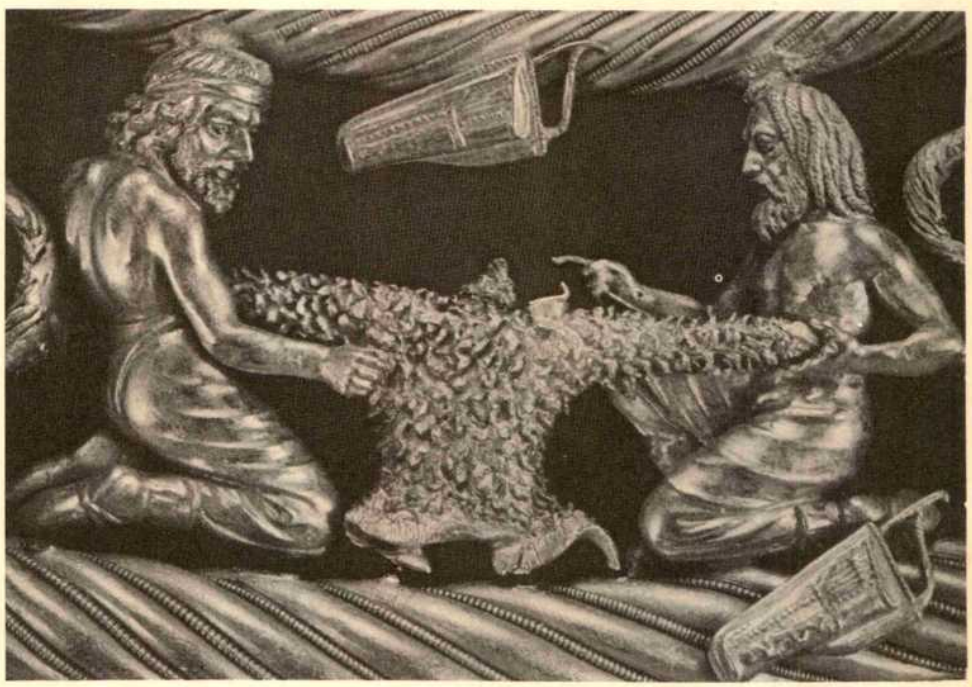
The Caliphate As the Caliph combined the role of the headship of state and religion, the overwhelming organised force of the armies became available for converting those who did not see the light quickly enough. The *Koran* supplied the integral truth of the relevant oral and written learning of the ages, enacted as a gospel, according to which life could be lived harmoniously. The book includes instruction about everything, from sowing and reaping to sanitation and personal hygience. The myth of Islam was a kind of paradise regained, by a poet-prophet who could release people from the supertitions and fears and dim hopes to a lucid order.

3. *A vase with finely engraved figures of elders in recumbent postures, in resplendent costumes from the Scythian culture of 4th century B.C. (Courtesy: Museum of Historical Treasures of Ukraine, U.S.S.R.)*
4. *Two Scythian shepherds, cleaning the skin of a sheep. The verve of the figures involved in work, carried out in the gold, shows extraordinary skill and sense of the dignity of work. 4th century B.C. (Courtesy: Museum of Historical Treasures of Ukraine, U.S.S.R.)*
5. *This Hasli (necklace) in gold, with delicate engravings of figures, recreates the violent activities of the Scythians. The ornament shows that the art of goldsmithy had reached the highest excellence already in the centuries before Christ. (Courtesy: Museum of Historical Treasures of Ukraine, U.S.S.R.)*
6. *This statue of a winged man-lion, though discovered in the excavation of Scythian remains, is dated to the 7th century. It suggests that one strain of this tribe had accepted Zarathustra's teaching. As we do not know the dates of Zarathustra's birth and death, we can only speculate how the figure appeared in Scythian complex. (Courtesy: Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, U.S.S.R.)*

There are certain vibrations of primitivist
consciousness in Central Asia
from the millennium
before the Christian era
which glow with the brightness
that fills our eyes with wonder.

How the Scythian nomads achieved
the height of brilliant craftsmanship
in gold and created aesthetic images
of themselves at work and play
shows that man's evolution
to the potential of his creative genius
is not through mechanical progress,
but by insight into the work
which gives him joy.

Also, we find certain symbols
of the early intense faith
of the fire worshipping prophet
like Zarathustra, of the painter-prophet Mani,
of Gautama the Buddha,
and the prophet Muhammad.



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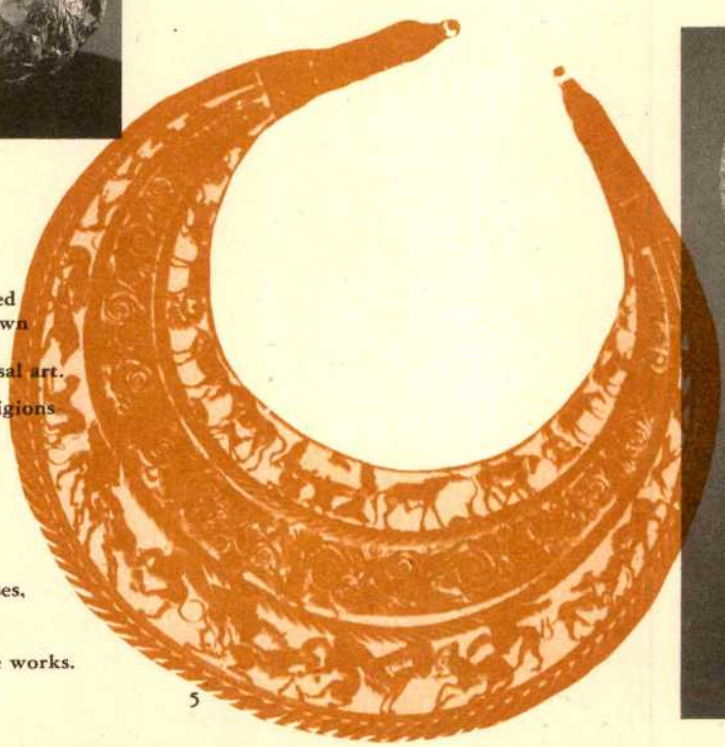

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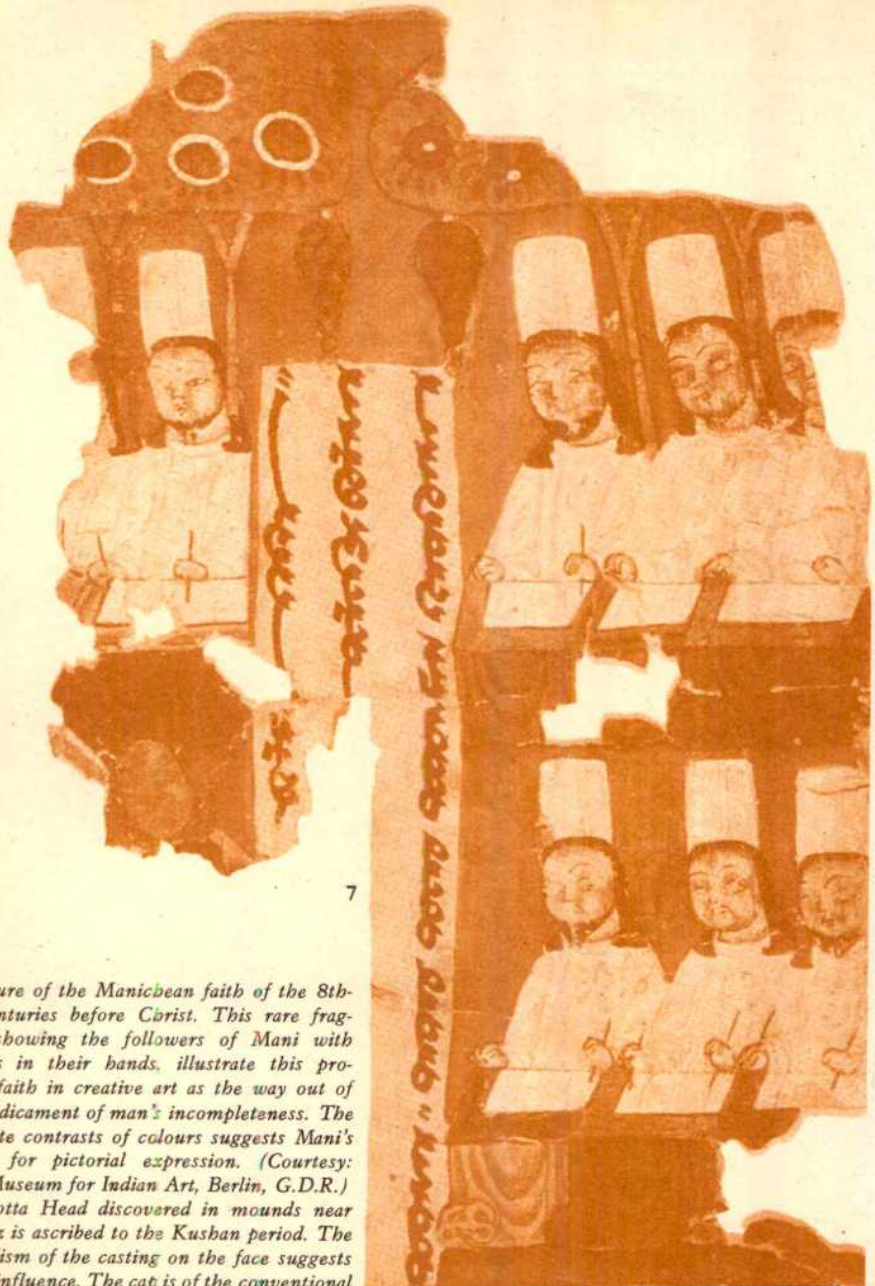
6

Invented to represent the ethos
of their beliefs, or to express
their philosophies, these achieved
an autonomous status of their own
in terms of workmanship
and have become part of universal art.

The underlying truth of the religions
which the symbols represented
were often forgotten.
But the major forms have come
to be accepted as artifacts
of the highest consciousness.

We reproduce these echoes
from the different consciousnesses,
not merely as works of art,
but to invoke suggestions of
the ways of life who made these works.



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7. *Miniature of the Manichean faith of the 8th-9th centuries before Christ. This rare fragment showing the followers of Mani with brushes in their hands, illustrate this prophet's faith in creative art as the way out of the predicament of man's incompleteness. The exquisite contrasts of colours suggests Mani's genius for pictorial expression. (Courtesy: State Museum for Indian Art, Berlin, G.D.R.)*
8. *Terracotta Head discovered in mounds near Termez is ascribed to the Kushan period. The naturalism of the casting on the face suggests Greek influence. The cap is of the conventional Central Asian type, probably 1st century B.C. (Courtesy: Tashkent Museum, U.S.S.R.)*
9. *This terracotta study of a warrior seems characteristically Kushan from the long coat and tight trousers. There is obvious Gandhara influence. (Courtesy: Tashkent Museum, U.S.S.R.)*
10. *The Buddha figure in the marble mandala, with two monks on the sides, is a rare icon in miniature, suggesting the ivory carver's technique of Begram, possibly exported from Gandhara. (Courtesy: Tashkent Museum, U.S.S.R.)*
11. *This wall painting of the Buddha shows a synthesis beyond the mixture of styles through which a Central Asian style became emergent about the 7th-8th century A.D. The coherence of the figure with its emphasis on volumes and curves, enclosed within an enlarged medallion-like rounder, has some affinity with the gracious Bodhisattavas of Fondukistan terracotta figures. The wings on the shoulders are reminiscent of Graeco-Roman imagery.*

12

12. *In the Graeco-Roman Buddhist iconography, there is a mixed metaphor of Apollo Bodhisattava. In this head from the Hadda monastery, in ancient Gandhara, we find the Greek God with his ringlets, all cast in the mould of the potential Buddha consciousness. Even the grace of the Gracian bend of the head is sought to be fused with the feeling of calm of the half closed eyes.*

13 & 14 *The fragments from Afrosiab wall painting of the 6th century A.D. shows the continuity of the Buddhist frescoes of Fondukistan, Bamiyan and Miran into the middle of Central Asia. The Sassanian style of costumes is fused with the flowing scarf of the early Buddhist. The elephant survives from the Buddha legends. The vitality of the figures in profile and three fourths face shows a development beyond the passive Buddhist representation of living creatures to a dynamic style expressive of warlike action.*

15. *Plate: The needs of the nomadic populations for utensils to eat in, were always fulfilled by the local ceramic craftsmen. Already before the Islamic conquest, the turning of the wheels was in active process in Samarkand. This design of the ceramic plate shows the coming of Islamic influence into the indigenous craftsmanship.*

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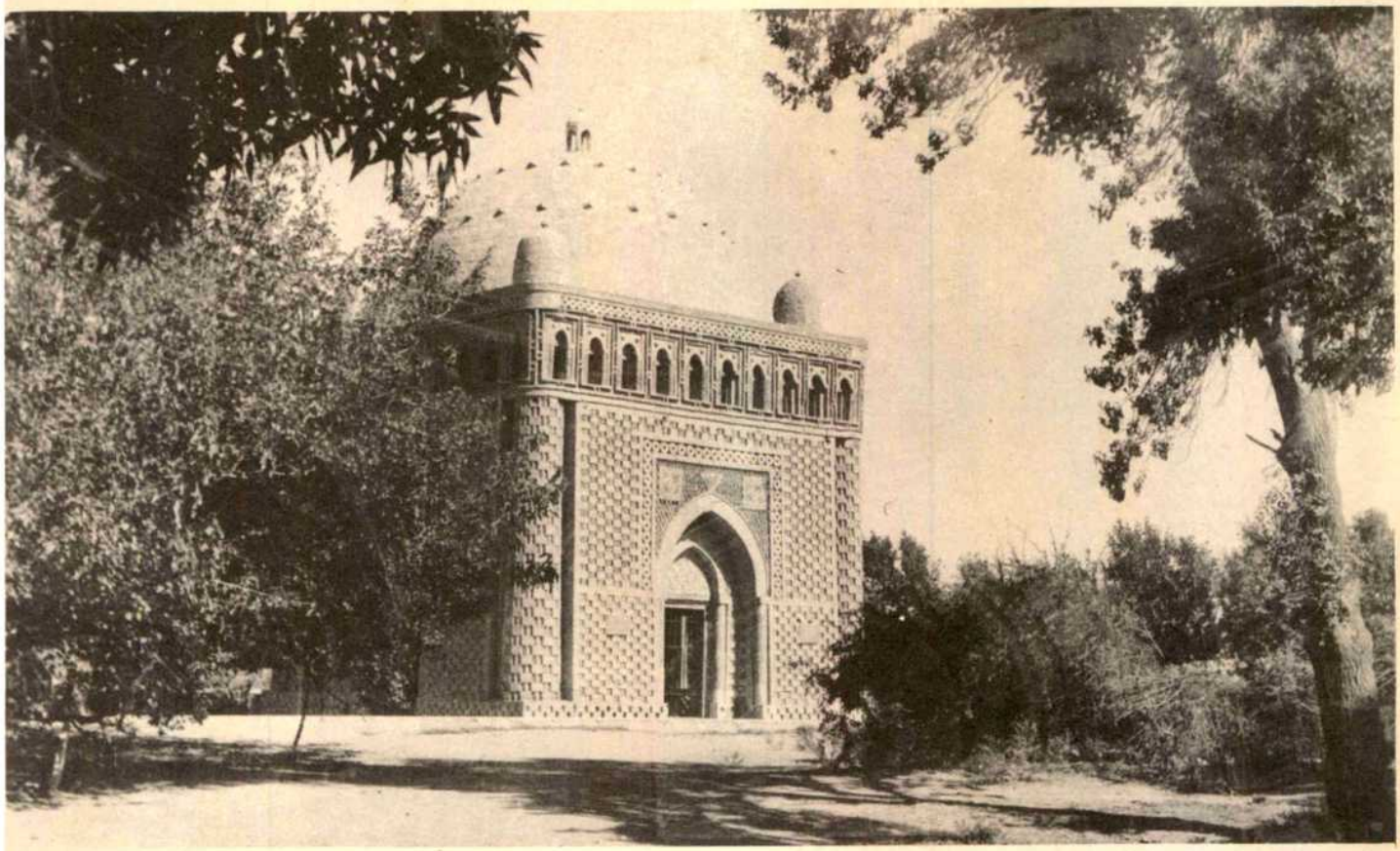

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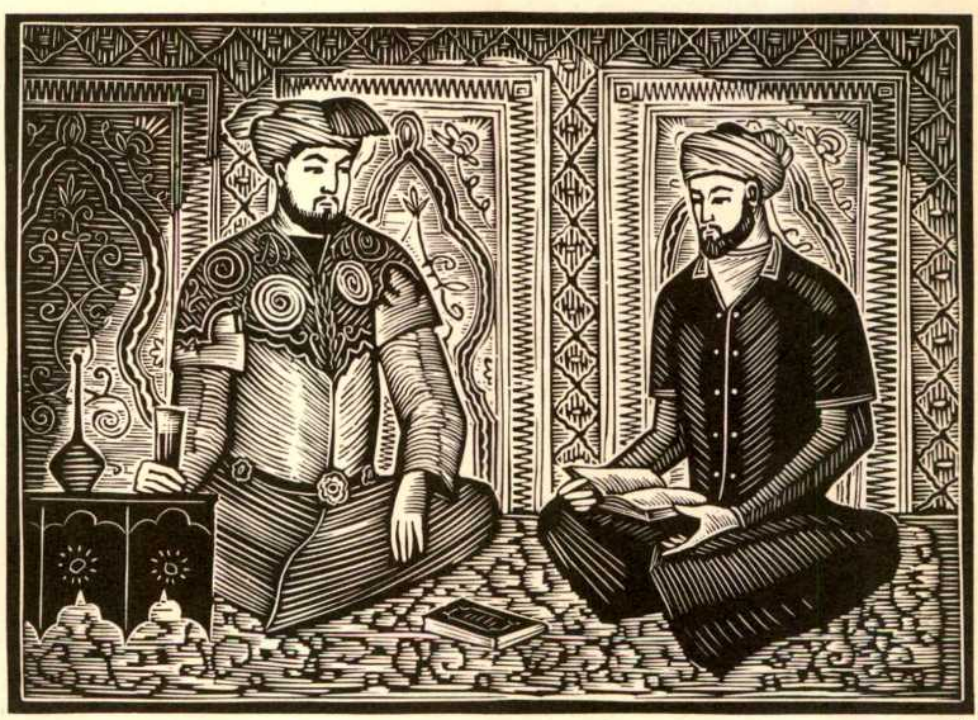
6. *This Mausoleum of a Samanid Prince in brick mosaic is a unique structure in Bokhara of which the influence was to be felt in later architecture is simple, even austere. The curvature of the dome uplifts the structure, proving the high quality of Central Asian craftsmanship even before the Timurid innovations.*
7. *On the same archway of the tomb of Kuli Khan on the outskirts of Bokhara, had been attempted the Islamic Mehrab as the style was travelling from Khorasan. The tile decorations are still elementary but show mastery of detail.*
8. *A contemporary visualisation of the poets, Ali Sher Nawai and Jami, who were educated in the Ulug Beg Madrassa in Samarkand before they went to settle in Herat under Sultan Hussain Mirza.*



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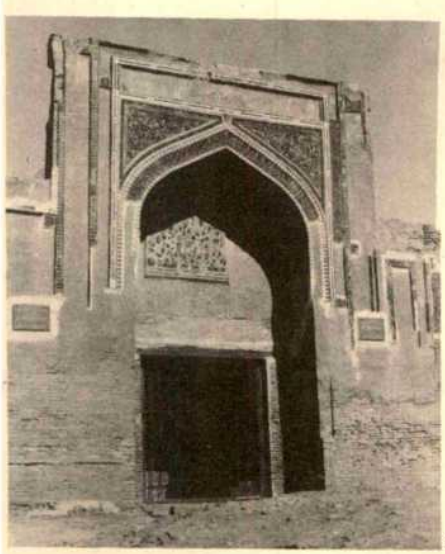


17

The legend of Kusam-ibn Abbas: cousin of the Prophet Muhammad: Shah Zindeh

Already, under the first Caliph of Baghdad, the traders had brought rumours of the new faith to Arabia. In the middle of the 7th century, we hear that Kusam, son of Abbas, a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, came to Samarkand, to preach Islam, (which means peace), at the same time as the Arab conquerors were investing the city. The local resistance killed him. According to legend the holy man picked up his head, after it had been cut off, in his right hand and descended into a well, from which a path led to an underground garden. There he is supposed to have lived until his death. So, when his mausoleum came to be built in the 12th century, the group of buildings was called *Shah Zindeh,* which means the 'living king'.

Samarkand accepts the new faith 8th century A.D.

In the early 8th century, the oasis of Samarkand became part of Baghdad Caliphate as, in 712 A.D., the Arab commander Kotaiba-Ibn-Moslem besieged the town and took it after a long siege. The resistance force which had spread out into the countryside revolted a year later, but the new authority crushed the recalcitrants and introduced a large number of Arabs into the area. There were fresh revolts within the next few years. One of these led by the hero, Mukanna, spread through the valley of Zafarshan and Kashka rivers. The people of Samarkand and the nearby oasis, oppressed by their own feudal lords, tended to accept the new faith.

(9)

The Tahirids and The Samanids 9th-10th centuries A.D.

After the decline of the Caliphate in Baghdad, about the early 9th century, local dynasties, like the Tahirids and Samanids, began to prevail. The extended trade routes brought prosperity. The city of Samarkand enlarged itself, beyond the Afrasiab to what is now called the 'Old Town'. The crafts of ceramics, glass-making, silk, cotton and paper manufacture were revived. A contemporary of the 10th century wrote: 'Samarkand is a large flourishing town. It is a place where traders gather from all corners of the world'.

(10)

The 11th and 12th centuries saw a succession by local dynasties.

The terror of Chengiz Khan 1280 A.D.

The mighty Mongol conqueror, Chengiz Khan, seized the city of Samarkand in 1280 A.D., and destroyed it almost completely. The inhabitants fled into the desert.

Marco Polo's description of Samarkand

By the end of the 13th century, however, the Italian traveller Marco Polo rested here and described it, as 'a very large and impressive township'. It seems that Jagtai, the second son of Chengiz Khan, had rebuilt it.

(11)

Shah Zindeh mausoleum 14th century

In the early part of the 14th century, the oldest of the *Shah Zindeh* mausoleum seemed to have come up.

Timur 1370 A.D.

In 1370 A.D. another Mongol conqueror, Timur, began to build an Empire, with Samarkand as his capital.

Like his predecessor Chengiz Khan, the new Sultan ambitiously carried his arms to Arabia and Anatolia towards the south-west across Khorasan, and down south to Northern India. Out of the conquest, loot and rapine, he brought back untold wealth and thousands of craftsmen from the civilisations he had annexed.

Timur orders reconstruction of Samarkand 1371 A.D.

As the walls of Samarkand had been smashed during the Mongol sieges, Timur ordered the restoration of the ancient town, with a new defence system in 1371 A.D., and saw it completed before 1372 A.D.

A whole new township was laid out with wide bazars. Buildings in brick took the place of those in clay and wood. Palaces were constructed at Kesh, with splendid gardens on the site where now stands *Shahr-i-Sabz*, the green city. Timur put an inscription on the chief gates: 'Let he who doubts our power and magnificence look at our buildings'.

Gur Emir

The most ambitious of the constructions attempted by Timur, was the Bibi Khanum mosque, in honour of his chief wife. This became the highest Islamic place of worship in the East at that time. And he planned, in his own lifetime, his own mausoleum, called the *Gur Emir*, which was completed by his son, Sultan Muhammad, and stands in all its shining splendour today as it did in the early 15th century. Timur also extended the *Shah*

Zindeh complex, by building small mausoleums over the graves of one of his favourite wives and for some of his generals.

De Clavijo's account of Timur's Samarkand

De Clavijo, who came to Timur's court in an ambassadorial delegation from Spain, wrote about the Samarkand of Timur's time in 1404 A.D.: 'It is rich not only in food, but in silks, in satins and tafetta, which abound there, in fur and silk linen, cosmetics, spices, gold and lapis lazuli and other goods... many different wares from China, India, Tartary and other places, including various parts of Samarkand kingdom, which is most rich, are sold in Samarkand each year.'

Timur: paradoxical personality: conqueror and worshipper of Sayed Bereke

Paradoxically, the man who had destroyed the cities of half the world in the first part of his life, built quite a few in the second. And he seems to have displayed the same mixture of opposite qualities of murderer and divine, as some other feudal conquerors. Into the *Gur Emir* mausoleum, under Timur's advice, were brought the remains of his spiritual adviser, Mir Sayed Bereke, all the way from Andhkhal in Afghanistan and put right ahead of the Emperor's own grave. The conversion of the destroyer of life may have been brought about when he faced his own death.

Of course, towards the end of his life, the Emperor had established ambassadorial relations with many mediaeval courts like Genoa, Venice, Turkey, Spain, France and England.

(12)

Death of Timur Shahrukh Ulug Beg

In February 1405 A.D., while he was preparing to invade China, Timur died in the oasis town of Otrar. His elder son, the favourite crown Prince Sultan Muhammad, having been killed during a campaign in Iran, his younger son, Shahrukh, ascended the throne. But Shahrukh moved his capital to Herat, leaving the Central Asian territory between the Sir and Amu Daryas, with Samarkand as centre, to his own eldest son, Ulug Beg.

This prince, who ruled between 1409 and 1449 A.D., was one of the most brilliant kings of the Timurid dynasty.

Astronomical researcher

During his lifetime, he organised the kingdom by reducing taxation and encouraging trade and founding many Madrassas. He gathered up the previous strains of knowledge, particularly in astronomy, and founded the second observatory of Asia in Samarkand, the first having been established by the Turk north of Tabriz. Ulug Beg measured time at only fifteen minutes short of our modern Greenwich time. He had as colleagues eminent scholars like Gyas-ud-din Jamshed, Ali Gushebi and Kazi-zada Rurui.

Builder of Madrassas

Ulug Beg looked after the old construction erected by his ancestors and built the great Madrassa on Registan, as well as another school in Bokhara. And he completed the *Gur Emir* mausoleum, his motto, which indicates the initiation of a renascent process throughout the Timurid Empire, reads as follows:

'Knowledge is immortal'

'Religion dissolves into obscure corners;
The power of kings ends in the grave;
Knowledge is immortal.'

The orthodox mullahs did not like his scientific and rational approach to the universe, and had him murdered in 1449 A.D.

(13)

There was confusion in Samarkand for sometime to come.

Ali Sher Nawai Jami

But the tradition of learning had lasted. Ali Sher Nawai seems to have lived here in the 1460's and studied for two years at the Madrassa of Fazalullah Abu Al-Laisi. His companion at the school was the poet Jami. Both suffered the humiliation of poverty, but continued to write poetry. Their fame reached the ears of the Timurid Prince, Sultan Hussain Bayqara, who invited them both to his court.

Bihzad

Ali Sher Nawai was appointed Prime Minister and soon gathered round him some of the most distinguished scholars, poets, architects and painters, including the great master Kamal-ud-din Bihzad.

Babur

Towards the end of the 15th century, another descendant of Timur, Zahir-ud-din Babur, ruled Samarkand for a short time and left an account of the city in his memoirs.

(14)

Centre shifts from Samarkand to Bokhara 16th century

In the early 16th century, the capital of Central Asian kingdom was moved from Samarkand to Bokhara. But the fame of the city, as a creative centre, for ceramic ware, weaving, metalwork, paper making and cookery, survived, almost each street being named after a craft.

Samarkand under Yaland Tusk Bahadur: 17th century

The story of Samarkand during the bulk of the 17th century is bound up with the initiatives of Uzbek Amir, Yalangtush Bahadur, a powerful feudalist military leader, who took advantage of the weakness of the central dynasty in Bokhara and asserted his independence, amassing considerable wealth for his family.

Decay in 18th century

During the first half of the 18th century, the envy of feudal chieftains for each other, led to internecine quarrels. Samarkand seems to have suffered heavily from frequent battles and became almost deserted.

Restoration

In the 1770's some order was restored and the city hummed again with the traditional crafts.

(15)

Samarkand under Czarist rule in 19th century

In the early 19th century, the Czars of Russia established an embassy at the court of the Amir of Bokhara.

Writing in 1841-42 A.D. the orientalist N. V. Khanykov described Samarkand as 'a place of ancient and mediaeval monuments'. It seems that the high wall surrounded the city with slits, towers and six gates. The walls were 13.9 kilometers in perimeter and enclosed an area of 10.4 sq. kilometers. The city was full of gardens in network of canals and tanks, two stone caravanserais and three hamams. There were several winding narrow streets, connected with large trading centres, all linked with the Registan complex and six town gates. The dominant boulevard lay between the Bibi Khanum mosque and the Chor Su. The fort was in the western quarter of the town, with 3.2 kilometers long outer walls and two gates.

The Khan's palace and the army barracks were inside this citadel. The Koktash of blue stone, which is now in the courtyard of *Gur Emir* mausoleum, was then in the Palace. About twenty-five to thirty thousand people lived in the city.

(16)

The Czarist armies annexed Samarkand on May 2nd, 1868 A.D. when a treaty was signed between the Imperial power and the Amir, by which, authority was passed on to the Czar over the Samarkand and Katta Kurgen regions. A Zafarshan District was formed and was brought under the Governor-General of Russian Turkestan.

Under the Czars, European style architecture was introduced. And trade between the centre of the Czarist Empire and the oriental regions was encouraged.

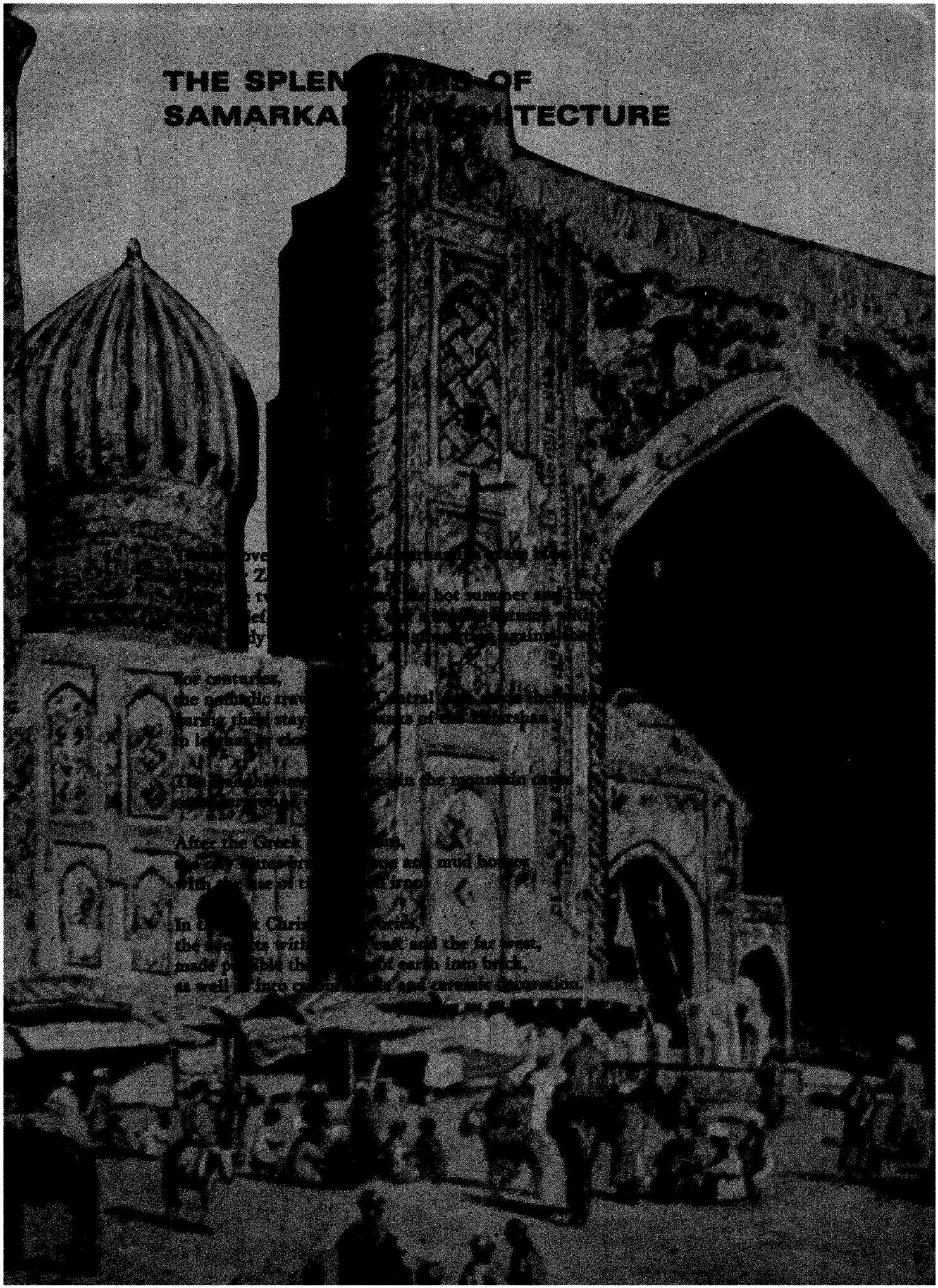
In 1888 A.D., Samarkand was linked with the Caspian Sea by a railroad. This railroad further connected Samarkand with Margilan, Audizhan and Tashkent. The railway system was to open up Central Asia for the export of raw materials to the industrial north.

From then on the modern industries began to penetrate the whole region and Europeanisation began in full swing. Into the architecture of Samarkand was introduced a town plan, necessary for an agro-industrial society. Concentric ring roads were constructed, intersected by radial roads, converging towards the centre.

October Revolution 1917

After the October Russian Revolution of 1917, Samarkand became a part of the planned economy of U.S.S.R., as one of the major towns of the Uzbekistan Republic. And the National Culture of the people began to be renovated by the formation of educational establishments, museums, theatres, seminaries, children's parks and contemporary housing.

THE SPLEN[illegible] OF SAMARKA[illegible] ARCHITECTURE



Mosque Madrassa and Mausoleum

With the advent of Islam, this latter tendency
prevailed over all others.
And the styles of construction, specially of the holy places,
like the mosque, the madrassa and the mausoleum,
from the emergent techniques of the Arabian desert,
Iran and north Africa became accessible to those
who emulated the ideals of the caliphs of Islam.

Splendours of architecture of Islamic period

It was in this period
that the precious space of the Samarkand oasis seems to have
seen its most vital splendours
in indigenous architecture.

The outer wall

As the green, lush landscape was mainly the resting place,
temporary or permanent, of the tribes,
camping here before further movement,
the first important construction was a protective wall,
necessary for defence. Such a boundary was already in existence around Samarkand
during the pre-Christian period.
And water had been brought through channels
to the elevated parts of the city.

Rebuilding of Diwar-i-Kiamat

In the seventh century,
this wall called Diwar-i-Kiamat (wall of the judgement day),
was rebuilt by twelve thousand craftsmen,
giving protection to the modest mud houses within the city.

The first mosque,
a primitive construction on a high spot,
came in 713 A.D.
Nearby were buried the Arabs who were killed in the battles.
And the invaders occupied the rough fortress,
as well as the mud houses,
now separated into squares according to a geometrical plan.

In the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. the feudal dynasty
of the Samanids, got built a palace in the fort of Kokhand.

During this time, the city was in four parts.
The old fortress, which made an arch with its walls:
The inner city, which included the suburb of Medina
— Shakhristan: the further suburbs beyond Medina to the south,
the north and the west: the annexes of the town in the rural parts of Samarkand,
with the big gardens and country houses of the nobles.

This pattern seems to have continued during the early Islamic period
between the ninth and tenth centuries,
only adding below the southern gate of the Afrosiab,
caravanserais, market buildings and store houses.
The materials used were mainly carved panels of brick,
with rich decorations, as have been found in the excavations of palaces of feudal kings.
The city had six gates,
from which issued the six radial roads towards the highways in the desert.

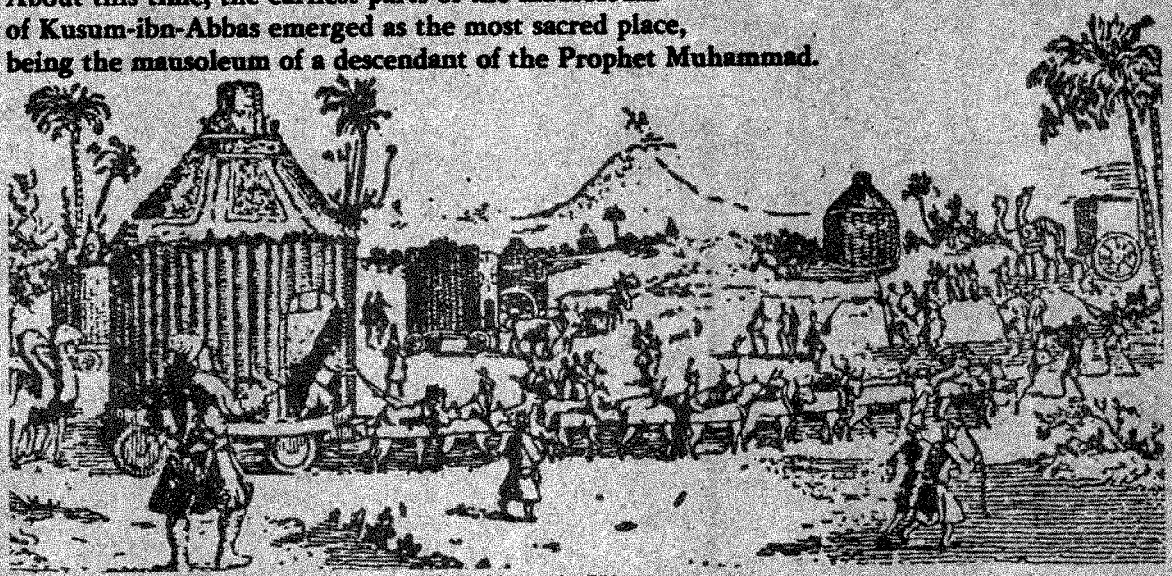
Main mosque

At the end of the twelfth century,
the main mosque was rebuilt in the fortress.
The mausoleum of the Kapakhanid Sultan,
Ibrahim-bin-Hussain (1186-1199 A.D.) was erected.

And, later, just before the Mongol conquest,
the palace of Korezun Sheikh Muhammad had begun to be built.

Parts of Shah Zindeh and of 12th century

About this time, the earliest parts of the mausoleum
of Kusum-ibn-Abbas emerged as the most sacred place,
being the mausoleum of a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.



Mongol Devastation in 1280 A.D.

The onslaught of the Mongols under Chengiz Khan
decimated the city in 1200 A.D.

And it took nearly two centuries before Samarkand re-emerged into the shape and form of human habitation.
The excesses of the invasion had brought a compensatory intensification
of faith. The ambition of the successors of the conqueror, Kubla Khan,
in China and Hulagu in Khorasan,
began to be felt among the local nobilities in the construction of urban complex.

Greatest phase of architectural reconstruction under Timur

It was, however, when Timur the Lame made Samarkand his capital,
in the fourteenth century,
that the greatest phase of architectral reconstruction was seen.
And Samarkand truly became,
what a contemporary has called it:
'Shining point of the globe.'

A blood thirsty Mongol himself by origin,
as ambitious as his ancestor Chengiz Khan,
Timur wished to realise the dream, which his ancestor could not fulfil—
to build a universal empire.
And, after his wild campaigns,
upto the Black Sea in the west,
the Ganges in the south, and Sinkiang in the east,
he sought to centralise his empire by building a magnificent capital.

Impassioned genius

Like an impassioned genius, with a comprehensive outlook,
he first began to organise the building of the holy shrines
which he knew would become
the spiritual centres of the empire.

He integrated himself into tradition by concentrating,
initially, on the elaboration of the mausolea near the Shah Zindeh complex.
The choicest craftsmen, he had brought
as part of his loot from his campaigns,
were engaged in the task of the building and decoration,
in ceramic art, of bejewelled tiles, many-coloured mosaics, and intricate pendentives,
in miniature palaces, up and down the hill,
already consecrated by the mausoleum of Kusum-ibn-Abbas.

He transformed the city as well, in 1371-1372 A.D.,
by building the Fortress of Pala
and reconstructing the fortified walls of the outer city.
Later he followed the old city plan,
revived the water system and built market places for the buying and selling of merchandise.

Bibi Khanum

Apart from the magnificent layout of the city,
the creation of hundreds of fruit gardens, and parks of rest and culture,
he conceived the design of the biggest mosque in the world —
the Bibi Khanum.

The tall strolling ruins of this holy place show
what a splendorous structure it must once have been.

The Emperor gave attention to each detail by visiting the area every day,
ordering the demolition of ill-built parts,
and the disposition of the precious, colourful decoration.

Gur Emir

Like other Sultans,
he also ordered the building of his own mausoleum,
on the basis of the existing structure of Gur Emir,
but in a manner which was to make
this one of the finest creations of all time.
The conical dome of the cylindrical rounder,
above the basement of the graves,
still shines, with its indigo blue against the torrid sun.
The calligraphic mosaic gives it a solemnity,
heightened by the chaste decorations below.

Renaissance under Ulug Beg 15th century

The grandson of Timur,
the astronomer, philosopher and architect, Ulug Beg,
was to initiate, in the fifteenth century,
a total renaissance in Central Asia.
Not only did he patronise the building of the big madrassa
in the Registan Complex of Samarkand,
but he built the great observatory, which gathered unto itself
all the knowledge of the cosmos, of the Europeans,
the Ilkhanid Mongols, and the Hindus.

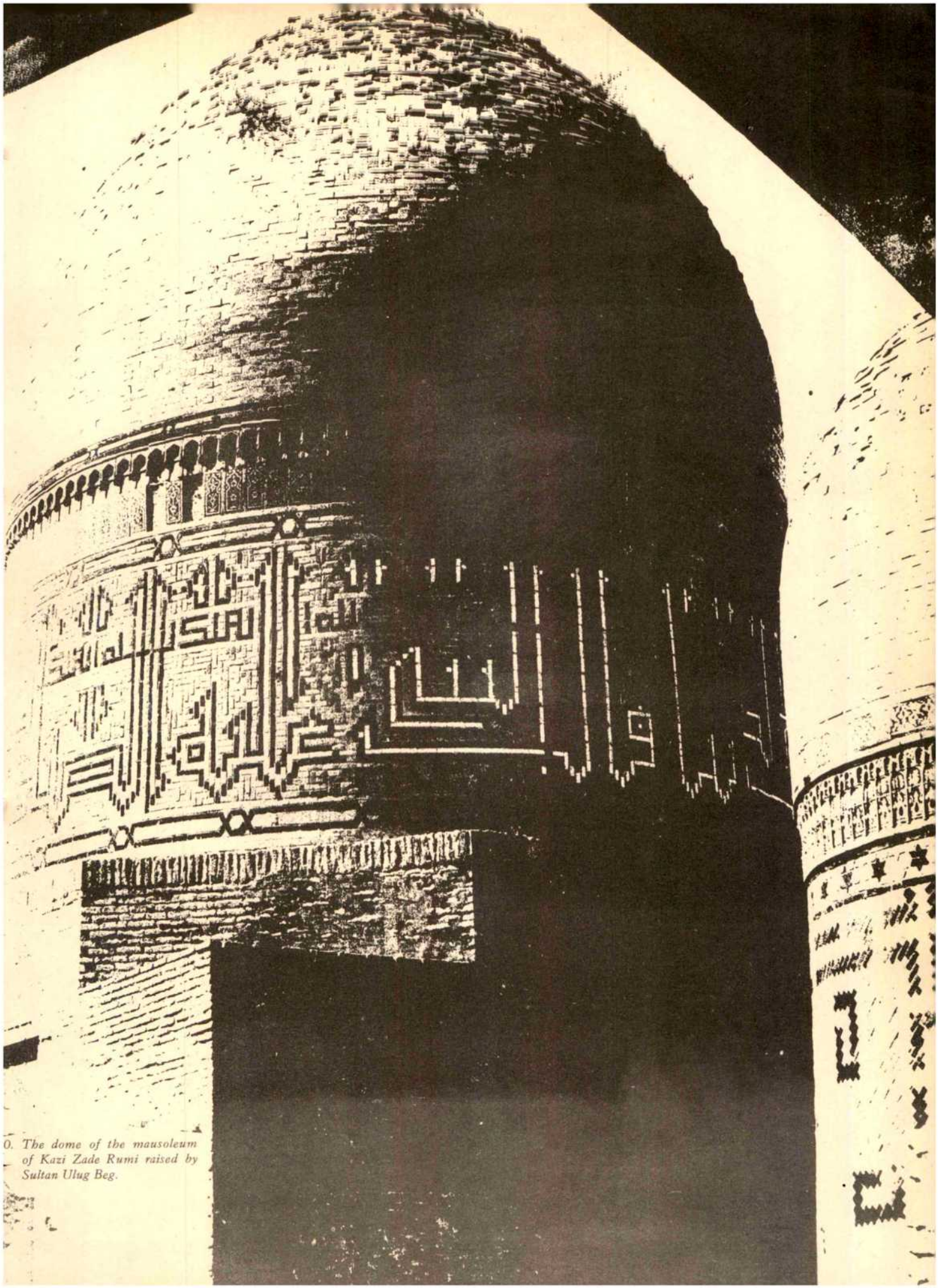
Influence of Bibi Khanum on Akbar's Buland Darwaza

The tradition initiated by Timur
was to be transformed into a new synthesis by Akbar the Great
in northern India, specially through the planning and building
of the dream city of Fatehpur Sikri in red sandstone.

It is not strange that in the Buland Darwaza mosque at Sikri
survive the echos of Timur's ambition
to build the biggest mosque in the world.

Rhythmic connections between earth and sky

The love of the One God, which gave its sanctions
to the buildings of the Timurids,
certainly gathered, in the totality of space,
and the totality of time,
and interposed into their immensities,
so much rhythmic connection between the earth and the sky,
that they lessen the distance between man and the creator —
whoever He is, in each of the monumental structures in Samarkand
and the buildings affected by the heightened constructions of that city.



0. *The dome of the mausoleum of Kazi Zade Rumi raised by Sultan Ulug Beg.*

SHAH ZINDEH

Entrance to Shah Zindeh

Our survey of Shah Zindeh begins with the order of buildings as we enter.

The modest main entrance faces south onto the road.

This doorway was built by Ulug Beg for his young son Abdul Aziz in 1434-35 A.D. The carved wooden portal is the work of a local Samarkand craftsman in the traditional Central Asian style of right angles.

The entrance is through a small chartak. In this building on the right is the row of offices.

Summer Mosque of Ustad Sadiq

On the left side of the corridor there is an aivan of a summer mosque built in 1911 by Samarkand craftsman Ustad Sadiq. This is a rough wooden structure. The ceiling is decorated with oil paints, and carved plaster work. There are traditional Samarkand ornaments on the panels and the imitation pendentives on the Mehrab in the middle wall on the west side. The design is mainly folk work.

Madrassa built by Daulat Kush Beg

On the right side an archway opens to small rooms where there is a single storey madrassa erected in 1813 A.D. by the Samarkand ruler Daulat Kush Beg.

Chartak

On the left side of the chartak entrance is a small mosque built about 1910.

Mausoleum of Timur's wet nurse, Uldja Ing and his daughter Bibi-Sinab

At the foot of the flight of steps on the left beyond the aivan there is a two-tiered mausoleum — one of the most effective buildings in the Shah Zindeh complex. This is remarkable for its slender proportions and unusual style of construction. The ceiling is painted in blue on white ground. The outer domes emerge from the square base.

Archaeologists have suggested that to the left and right of this composition were some structures which have now disappeared.

Legend has it that it was a mausoleum of the wet nurse of Timur, Uldja Ing, and his daughter, Bibi Sinab.

Mausoleum of Kazi Zade Rumi Astronomer of Ulug Beg

According to later historians, it is the mausoleum of the astronomer Kazi Zade Rumi, the astronomer teacher of Ulug Beg and his close friend. This has not been confirmed because the burial vault has not been opened.

Up through the second chartak (rebuilt in the 18th century) on the base of an older building, there comes to view the glistening facades of a double line of mausoleums, constructed in the second half of the 14th century, when Timur the Lame made Samarkand his capital.

Tuglu Tekin

On the right hand side of the corridor, the first building by the chartak is the mausoleum built, (according to the inscription) for Tuglu Tekin, daughter of Amir Khoja and the mother of Amir Hussain, the Commander-in-Chief of Timur, who was either drowned in the river or killed during the Mughalistan campaign. The door with the carved glazed terracotta is all that remains. This mausoleum is said to have been built at the site of a ruined tomb of the 11th-12th centuries and the old burial vault and part of the foundations date to the early mediaeval period.

Amir Hussain Mausoleum 1386 A.D.

The unnamed mausoleum situated opposite is sometimes wrongly connected with the name of Amir Hussain. The inscription fragments on the portal do not mention the name, but say 'that the person buried here died in 788 A.H. (1386 A.D.).'

Shadi-Mulk Aka mausoleum built by Turken Aka sister of Timur

An interpretation of the inscription shows that it was constructed by Turkan Aka, sister of Timur, for her daughter Shadi-Mulk Aka who passed away on 29th December 1370. In 1383 Timur's sister herself was buried here. These mausolea are not only near each other in the time of their construction, but also in their architecture. The structures possess arrow-type niches, framed in several narrow frames, pillars with faces made up of poles of terraces, in stylised intricate decorations dominate. There are inscriptions on the background of vegetation with tiny figures in the masonery. The range of colours is a sonorous blue violet. The mausoleum is one of the finest in the whole Shah Zindeh ensemble. Presumably, it was built by the masters Shams-ud-Din and Bar-ud-Din of Samarkand and Zain-ud-Din of Bokhara.

The technique of putting mosaics in the exterior seems to have been adopted here first. The decorations inside are refined and elegant, with profuse use of light blue and gold colours throughout. This mausoleum has a huge blue dome with a sixteen-faced structure of the windows, well lit interior and a porch with three wide frames flanked by huge columns on the corners. On the facade of the mausoleum is an assortment of carved mosaics. In the interior is a pavement made from hexagonal blue rows, flowers on swords covered with small golden figures of herons flying amid the flowers.

During the 1962 conservation work, window fragments of a lattice with pieces of coloured glass were found. The hand of some Persian masters seems to be obvious in the building of the Shirin-Bika-Aka of the mausoleum.

Octagonal mausoleum of Ulug Beg's time

Near the Shirin-Bika-Aka tomb is an octagonal mausoleum. The facade suggests that it was built in Ulug Beg's time. It is a pavilion with all eight open arches (some of them fallen down) crowned by small sloping domes, above which perhaps was another dome. Down below is a brick buried vault. Architecturally, it is modest. But rich ornamentation was done with glazed tiles and mosaics outside, while on white background in blue there are inscriptions inside. The date of the monument is the first half of the 15th century.

Towards the north of this construction were steps which once led into a burial vault. The remains of the walls nearby show that there was a mausoleum here in the 14th century. There is still another mausoleum of the same period of which only the burial vault and some carved marble tombstones remain.

On the frontage by the side of Shadi-Mulk-Aka there were three other mausoleums in the 14th century of which the remains are buried under the supporting wall.

Ulug Sultan-Bera Usto Ali of Nesafa (Karsha)

The next constructions on the left are unnamed. But the inscription on the second bears the name of the knight Ulug-Sultan-Bera. The first structure is popularly known after some Emir Abd-al-Kayum, but has inscribed on it the name of its builder, Usto Ali Nesafa, from Karsha in Central Asia. He seems to have worked in a style different from the Masters of Samarkand and Bokhara. On the face of this building are multi-flower mosaics. The ornamentation is geometrical and epigraphical in character, showing minute details of Islamic cultivation, full of right-angled corners, ornamental peaks, lettering on glazed bricks on the facades and on domes.

Amir Burunduk

On the left of the corridor stands the large unfinished structure. This is reported to be the mausoleum of Amir Burunduk, a general of Timur in 1380 A.D., though the fact has not yet been authenticated.

Tuman-Aka

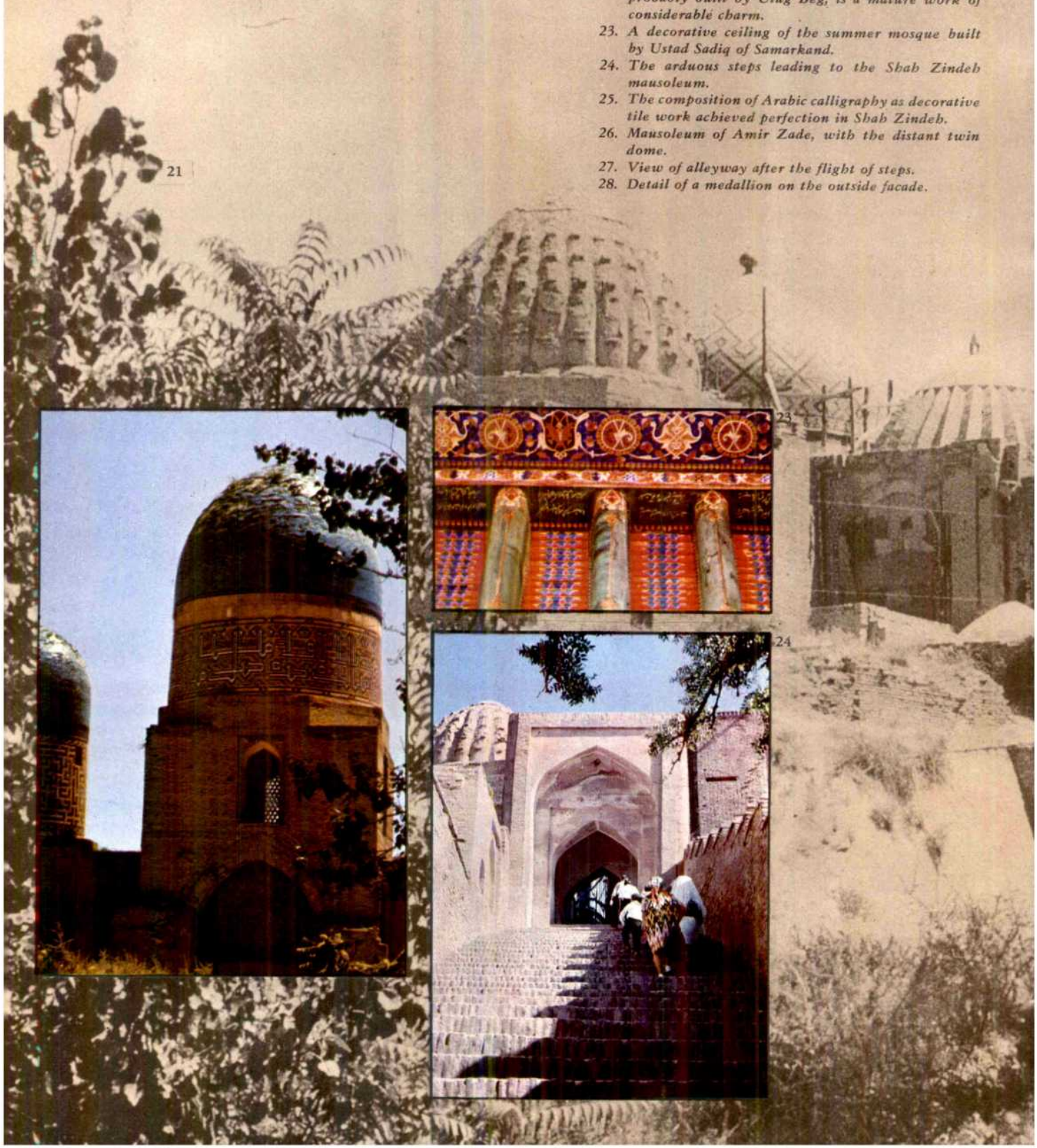
Near the mausoleum of Burunduk is situated the group of buildings, patronised, in 1405 A.D. by Timur's wife, Tuman-Aka. This complex includes a third chartak, a mosque and Tuman-Aka's mausoleum. (It seems Timur stayed in the mosque in 1399 A.D. on his return from his campaign in India.) There was a quadrangular passage in the house between the porch and the living quarters, covered by a dome. This was framed with garlands inside. The front portion was made up of bricks and carved mosaics.

From the west side the mosque is seen, decorated by three domes, mainly in the form of emerging arches with bright mosaics.

And there is visible the mausoleum of Tuman-Aka, built in her own lifetime. This structure, with its blue domes and porches, is decorated with mosaics and has a lush interior. The panelling is made out of bright yellow hexagonal plates, with gold-plated inscriptions. Above, is the light blue background of the walls; on the corners and the inside of the dome, are inscriptions mainly in bright blue colour, intermixed with red, among which are small landscapes with cypresses and palms and magnificent flowered trees and foliage. The beauty of the inscriptions on the porches reminds us that the calligrapher was Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Hojabeg Tabrizi.

K.P. 2059

21. *A panorama of the first structure of Shah Zindeh complex.*
22. *The blue dome arising on a buff square base of bricks, is elongated by the construction in-between of a large panel, with calligraphy engraved on it in tiles. Offset against the second cylindrical dome in the same materials this late 15th century complex probably built by Ulug Beg, is a mature work of considerable charm.*
23. *A decorative ceiling of the summer mosque built by Ustad Sadiq of Samarkand.*
24. *The arduous steps leading to the Shah Zindeh mausoleum.*
25. *The composition of Arabic calligraphy as decorative tile work achieved perfection in Shah Zindeh.*
26. *Mausoleum of Amir Zade, with the distant twin dome.*
27. *View of alleyway after the flight of steps.*
28. *Detail of a medallion on the outside facade.*



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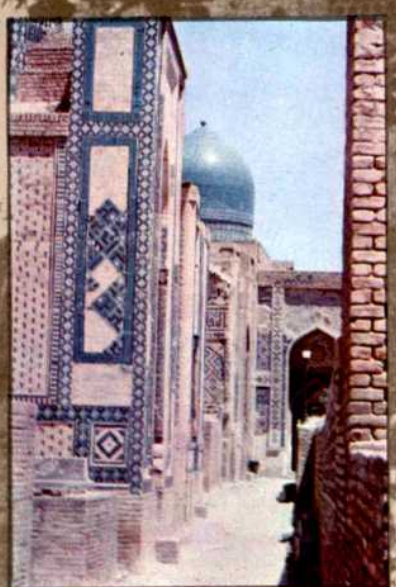

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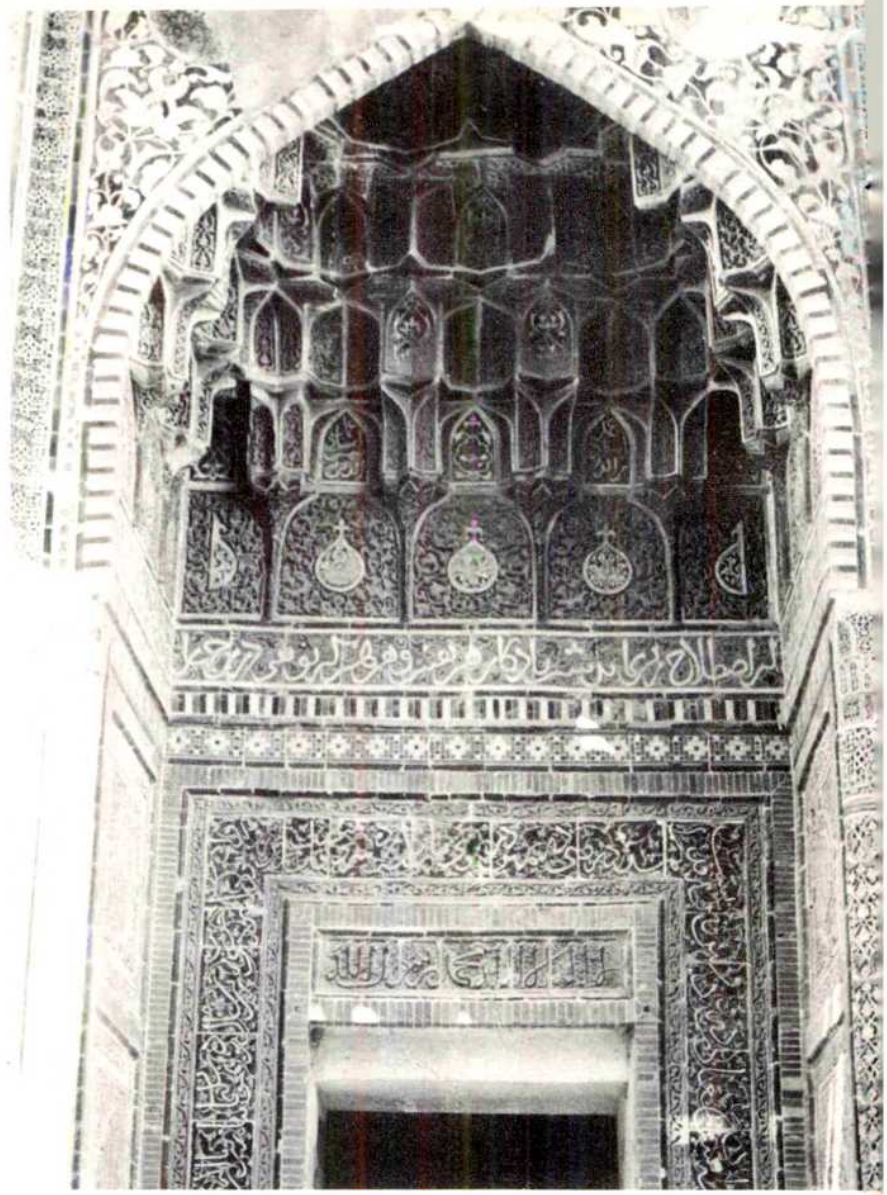

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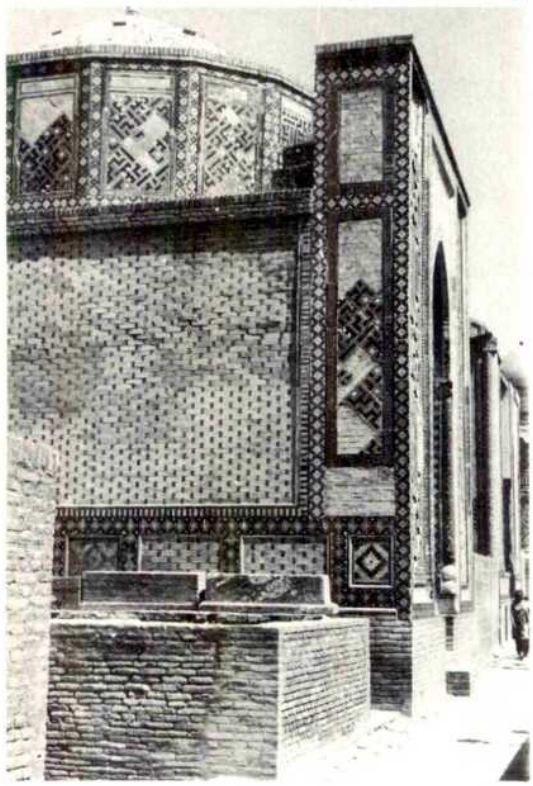
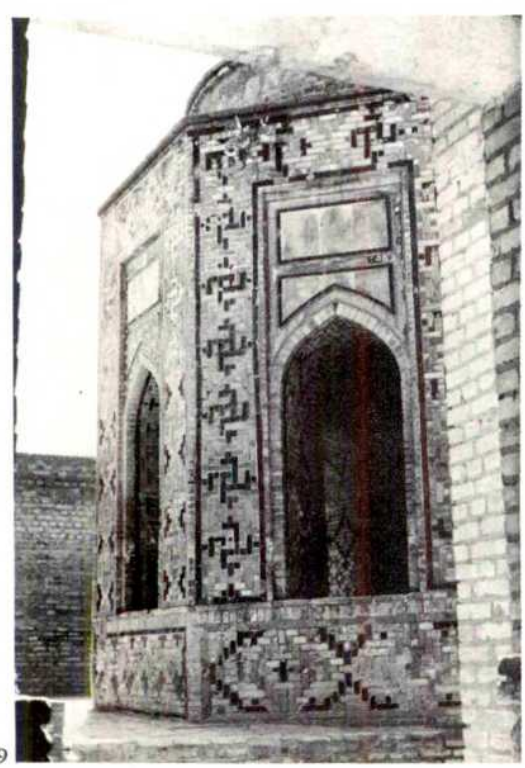


29. *Decorative hexagonal based mausoleum.*
30. *The front Mehrab of Shadi Mulk Aka. One of the earliest constructions is this mausoluem, built for Timur's niece in the 14th century A.D. The pendentives, engraved into the Mehrab above the entrance door are intricately imbedded like jewellery on the top of the facades. The cupola is rib shaped. In the lower part of the portal, there are two inscriptions about the craftsmen, Shams-ud-din and Bur-ud-din of Samarkand. Slender columns support the arch-like capitals. Inside walls of the portal are faced with majolica.*
31. *Side view of the mausoleum of Usto Ali.*
32. *Detail of intricate tilework.*
33. *The assemblage of the floral motifs and foliage with the lyrical line of the stumps into the pillar work of Shadi Mulk Aka is contrasted here with panels of stars and calligraphy and lunettes so as to variegate the effect and not tire the eyes.*



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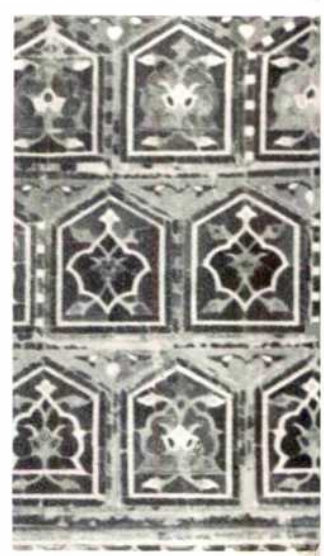

Islamic decorative art accomplished in Samarkand many kaleidoscopic effects by ingenious play with the mosaic form, created out of coloured tiles, in which blue, white and gold lines predominate, both in the Shah Zindeh and in the Registan complexes. The compositions are almost musical, as though the colours were shaken gently and formed themselves into patterns of their own accord. Actually, however, they were composed with great care by exquisite sensibilities receptive to the tonal values.

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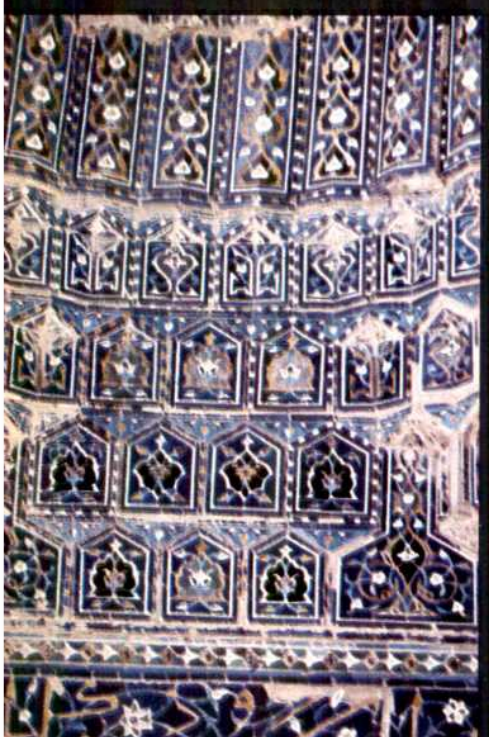

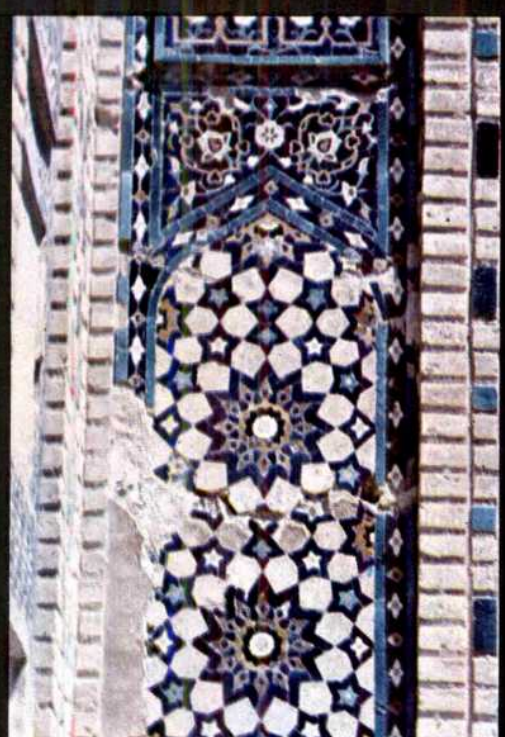

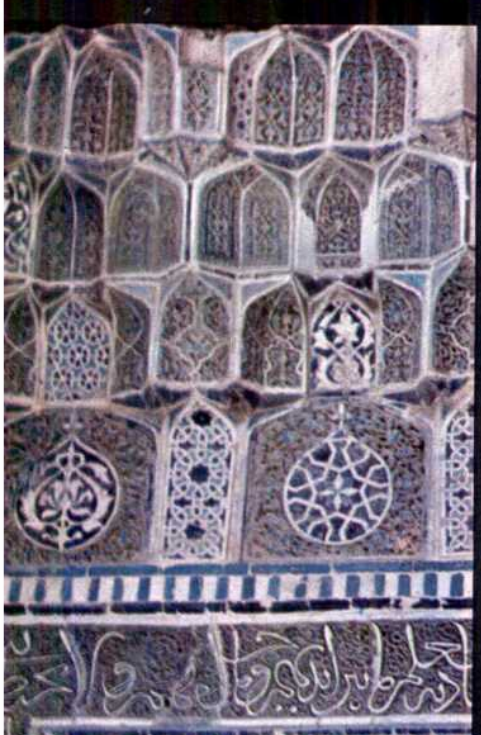

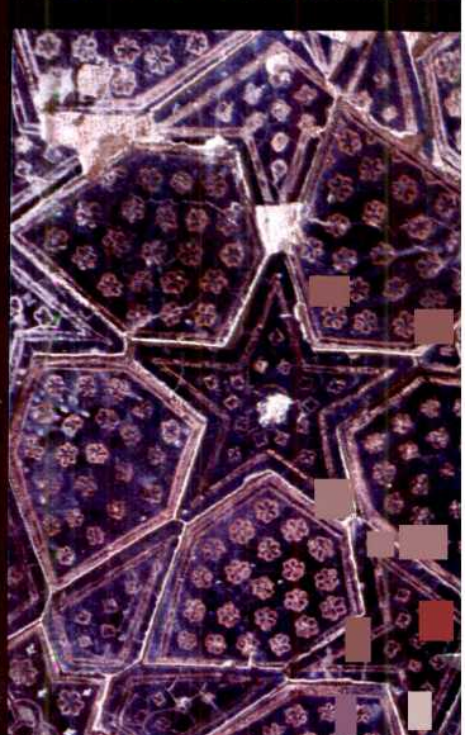

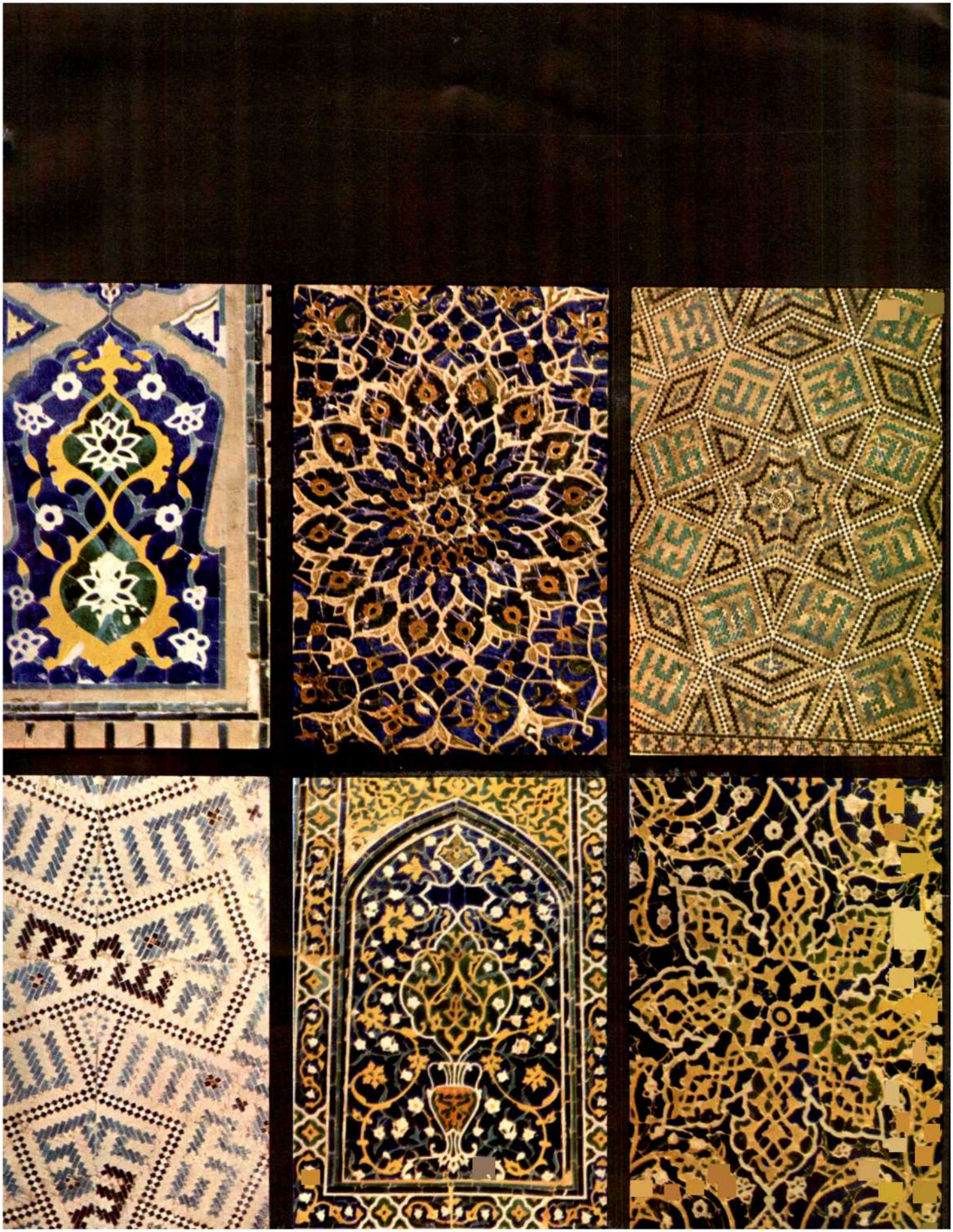

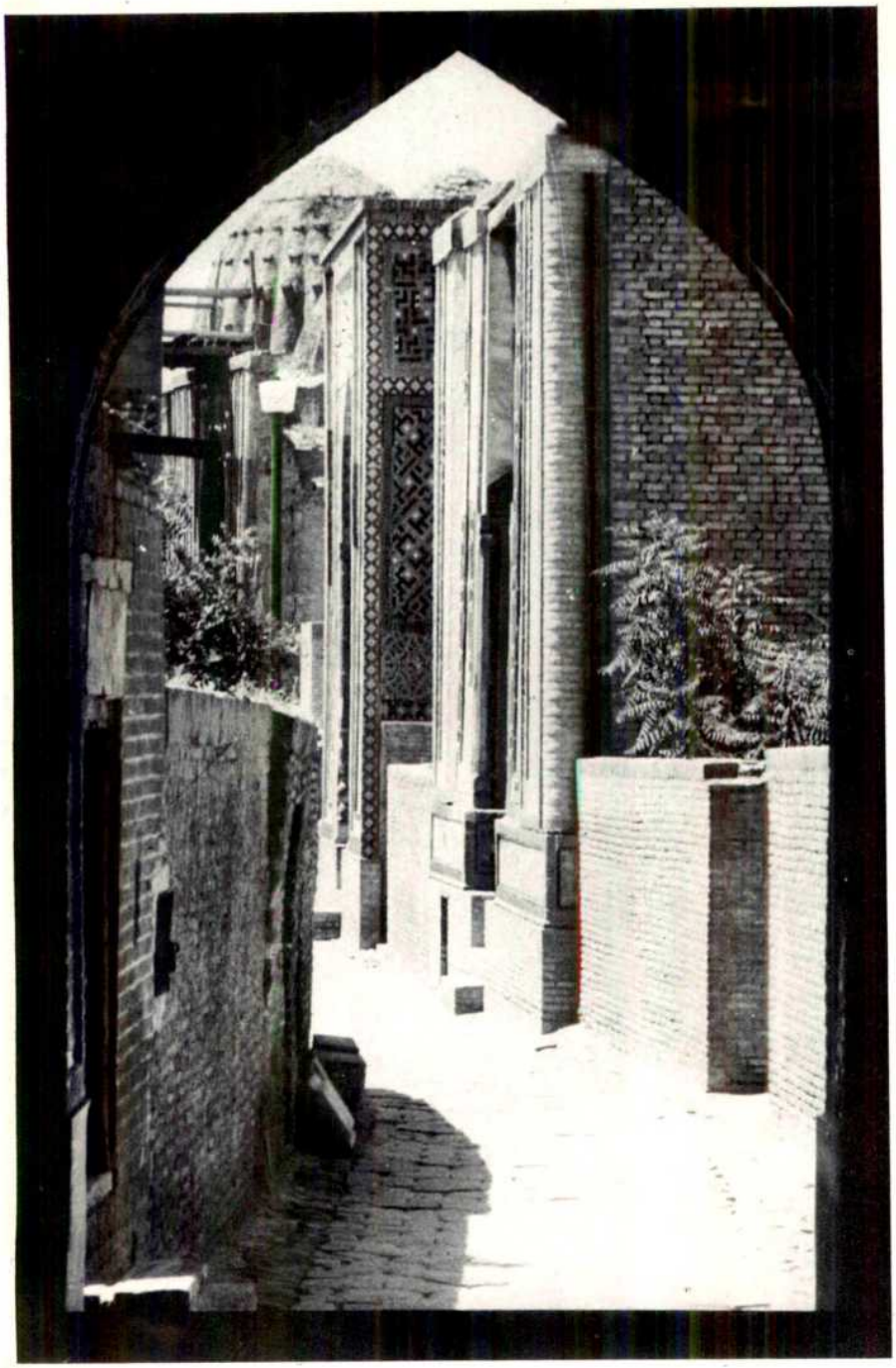

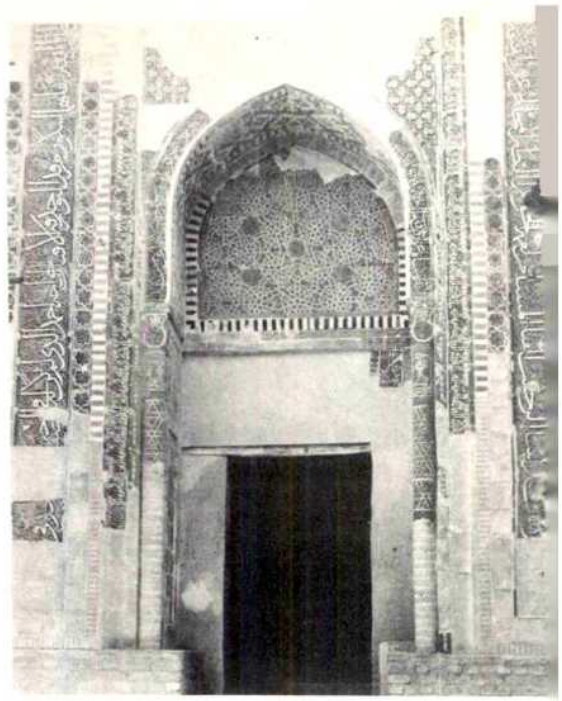

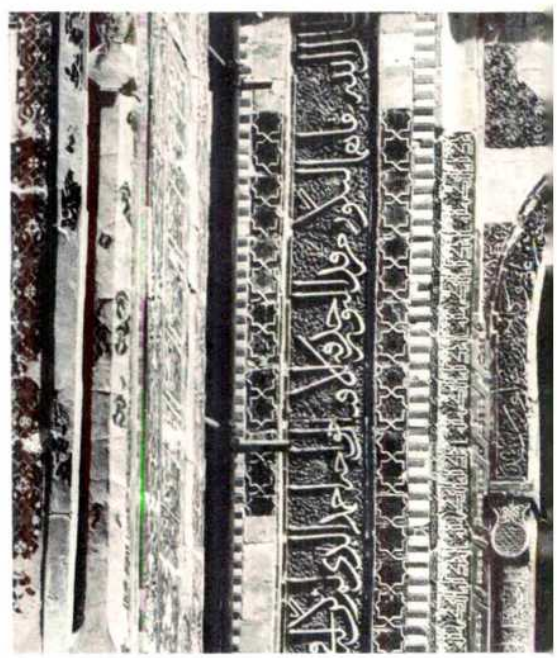

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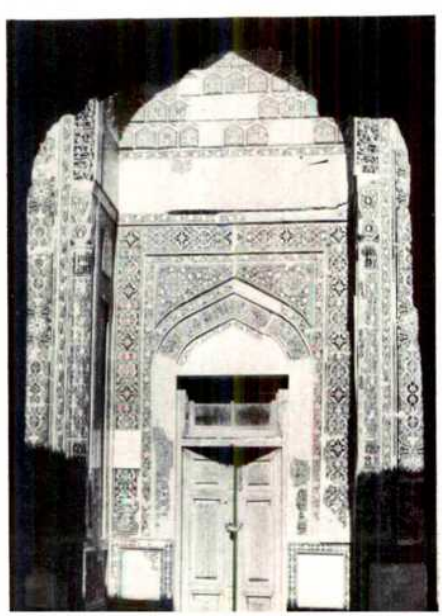


46. *Standing on an elongated spot is a large unfinished building of the mausoleum of Amir Burun Duk, one of Timur's Generals. The burial place is in the vault. Dome decorations are not finished.*
47. *On the outside gateway to the tomb of Kusum Ibn Abbas (1404-1405 A.D.) is this ivory carving with the relief of the Arabic calligraphy imbedded under a dome surrounded by foliage. Perhaps a memento of the work of an Indian craftsman brought by Timur.*
48. *Mausoleum of Tuman Aka. Portal was built for one of Timur's wife in the 14th century A.D. Timur stayed here in 1399 A.D. after the Indian campaign. The facade above the doorway is decorated with carved mosaics.*
49. *Mausoleum of Khwaja Ahmed (1360-1361 A.D.). The Kufic script panels of the rectangular facades are parallel to the light blue stars, a two colour brick panel, a thinner Kufic script panel, and slender pillars reaching upto the dome, where calligraphy takes over. The interior is covered with rich brick work and tile decorations. The architect Ustad Fakr Ali is said to have designed this mausoleum.*
50. *The enlarged view of the Kufic calligraphy imbedded into floral mofits displays a genius for lyrical splendour.*

In front of the mausoleum of Tuman-Aka stands a building where the inscription mentions the date 23rd December 1360 A.D., in memory of some woman, 'whom God saved in chastity'.

Khoja Ahmed built by Ustad Fakr Ali

Next to this, in the northern courtyard is the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed, almost facing the chartak. Both these buildings are so similar in style, with single domes and porch compositions and in decoration. But they also seem to have been constructed by the same architect, Ustad Fakr Ali, whose name is written on a designed wall of Khoja Ahmed. The porches and interiors are covered with rich brick work in the form of carved designs with unique tile decorations. These variegated patterns seem to be the work of the Samarkand Bokhara architects and ceramic workers who carried out the second group of mausoleums.

Kutlug-Aka

Another nameless 14th-century mausoleum next to Khoja Ahmed is said to house the grave of another of Timur's wife, Kutlug-Aka. The carved glazed terracotta decorations and the portal and interior seem to confirm this.

Dargah of Kasum-ibn Abbas:

Under the eastern arch of the third and last group is the entrance to the dargah of Kasum Ibn Abbas. The door has dark blue carvings. The date given is 1404-1405 A.D. The name of the architect is mentioned as Master Yusuf Shirazi.

The mosque inside the dargah was rebuilt in the 15th century and was later repaired several times. It has small rooms, shallow corridors, steps, stairs and room for ascent. At the end of the dark interior is the tomb of the saint Shah Zindeh.

Gurkhan

The mausoleum has two sections: The buried vault or Gurkhan, and a mosque or Ziarat Khana.

As the rebuilding was done in 1334-1335 A.D., this seems to be the earliest construction of Samarkand. There is an underground chamber beneath the mosque for the Ramzan forty-day fast.

Architectural style

All the architectural details, combining geometrical and epigraphical designs seemed to be of the beginning of the 14th century. The woodwork is of dark wood. There are narrow poles and carved elements. The entry through the small door was seemingly restricted to the devout worshippers and the elite.

The tomb of Kusum Ibn Abbas was given a new tombstone in four tapering layers of unequal size. The three below are in graduated rectangular design. The fourth is conical in the Mehrab style. The bright, blue, yellow, white and green tiles, richly ornamented with gold, decorate the sides. The two upper layers bear the inscription that Kusum, son of Abbas had been buried here. The date is given as 676-677 A.D.

The mausoleum does not possess any of the features mentioned by the Arab historian Ibn Batuta in the 14th century.

Shah Zindeh is one of the most important memorial ensembles of feudal architecture. In comparison to this the tombs of the caliphs are poorer.

Total Complex

The total complex presents vistas of beauty of tile work, mosaic and bejewelled compositions of delicate floral motifs unmatched anywhere in the world. Not a single building is unlike another in terms of scale or form and all of them have a certain sameness in the shape or rooms, porches and domes. And yet they enchant. The relative situation of each structure, being on a diagonal axis with respect to the other, breaks the uniformity and reveals the variety of decorations.

The complex also reveals the evolution of the Central Asian buildings in the 14th century, when experiments began to be made in multi-sided structures decorated with carved mosaics, glazed tiles and inlayed lettering. The main style seems to have been continued into the 15th century. But in the twenties and thirties of that century, there came new compositions. For instance, there appeared the mausoleum in the form of an octagonal open pavilion as the unnamed tomb near the mausoleum of Shirin-Bika-Aka.

The Shah Zindeh complex is not only a great memorial architecture, but also shows the peak of the ceramic art of Central Asia, Khorasan and Arabia, in the hands of potter-builders of the 14th and 15th centuries. Variations of techniques and ornamental motifs in ceramic design evidence to the extraordinary skill and fantasy of the builders.

BIBI KHANUM

The mosque Cathedral of Islam

In the social life of the towns of feudal east, the cathedral mosque played a less important role, than the Christian cathedral did in Europe in the middle ages. Only on Fridays, in the courtyard and in the porches, gathered the male population for performing prayers.

Sometimes, however, the mosque became a crisis place. For example in 1365 A.D., in the cathedral mosque of Samarkand, sounded the passionate appeal of the student Maulana-Zade to people to resist the aggressive Mongolians, who had beseiged the town. This appeal later became a signal for the heroic defence of the city, and grew into a powerful movement of revolt.

Timur's Dream

At the end of the 14th century, the Juma-Masjid could not cope with the demands of the growing population. After his Indian campaign in 1399 A.D., Timur ordered the construction of a new cathedral mosque. It is said that the Central Asian despot was impressed with the beauty and grandeur of the mosque of Delhi. So he ordered the craftsmen to build a more beautiful, bigger, and nobler structure in Samarkand.

'Happy Hour' of beginning of Bibi-Khanum mosque

On 11 May 1399 A.D. the "Happy Hour" predicted by his horoscope, the foundation stone of the future House of God was laid, and, by 1404 A.D., the construction was complete. The mosque was erected in the square near the main bazar of Kappan, not very far from the town gate Akhin; and wide streets were opened up to it during the same year.

Craftsmen brought from all Asia

In the construction of the mosque, master builders came from all over Central Asia, as also from among those brought by Timur from India, Azerbaijan, Fars, Khorasan, Iran and Syria. 'Specialists in different arts and paintings, each of whom poured all his talents, came to live and work here' — this was written by Sharif-ud-Ali-Yezdi, a contemporary of that time.

Timur's personal interest in construction

In the autumn of 1404 A.D. returning from a campaign, Timur inspected the mosque, and was not satisfied with the arches. He ordered reconstruction. And every day the king used to appear at the site. In the words of the Spanish Ambassador — de Klavijo: 'the workers were thus kept agog.' In November of that year fell deep snow in Samarkand, as a result of which the work was stopped. At the beginning of 1405 A.D., Timur arrived in Otrar on the way of his last campaign in China. The work did not continue further. The mosque remained as it was at the beginning.

Surviving remains today

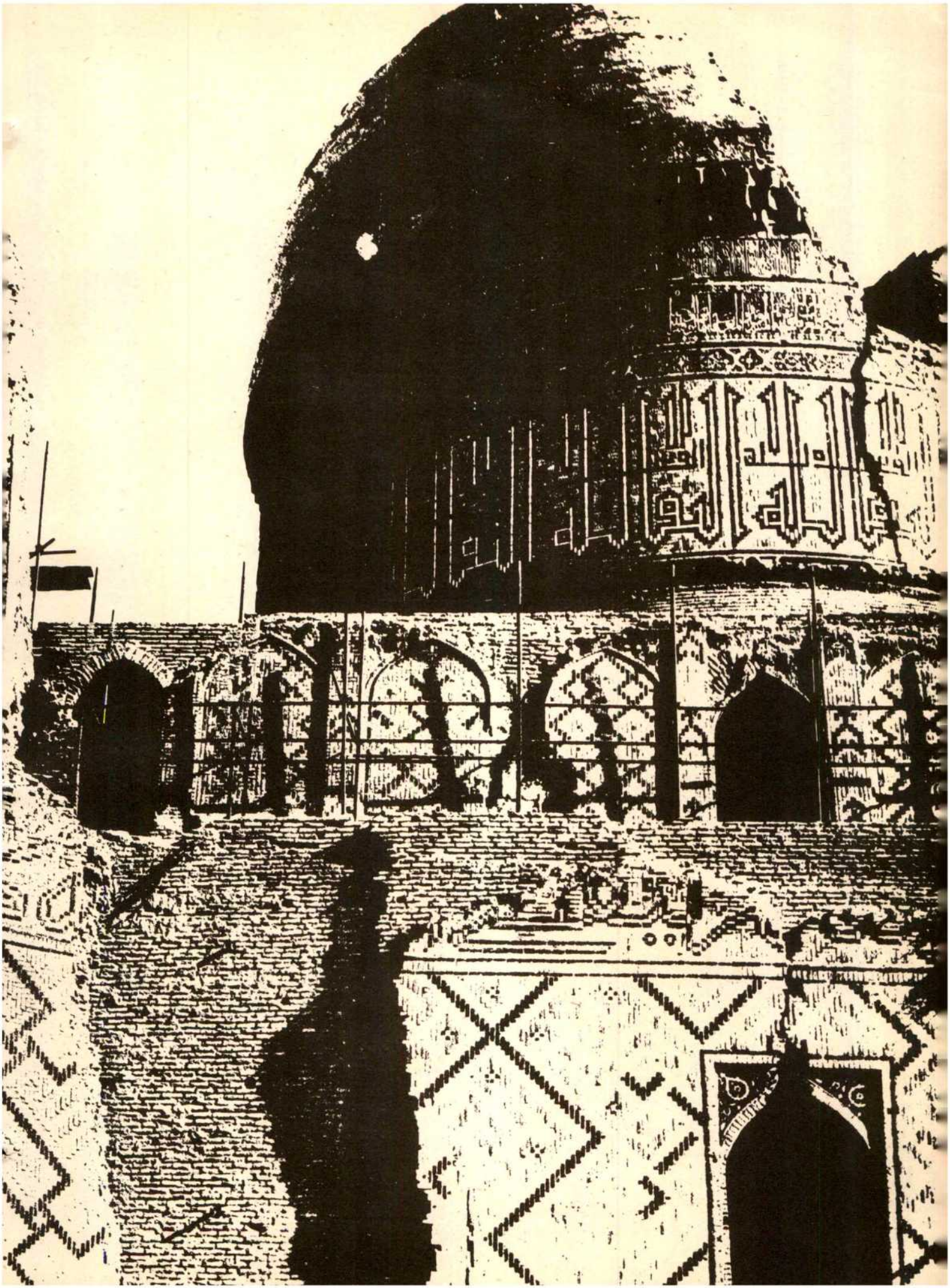
At present, the remains of the mosques, which are preserved, are the entrance porch, two side tomb-structures, the minar and the main building. The ruins are situated in a green garden, among small houses and a nearby bazar. The architectural forms and the decorations leave an unforgettable impression. And we can sense the inspiration behind architectural details, and can speculate about the imagination of the craftsmen who worked to realise this noble dream.

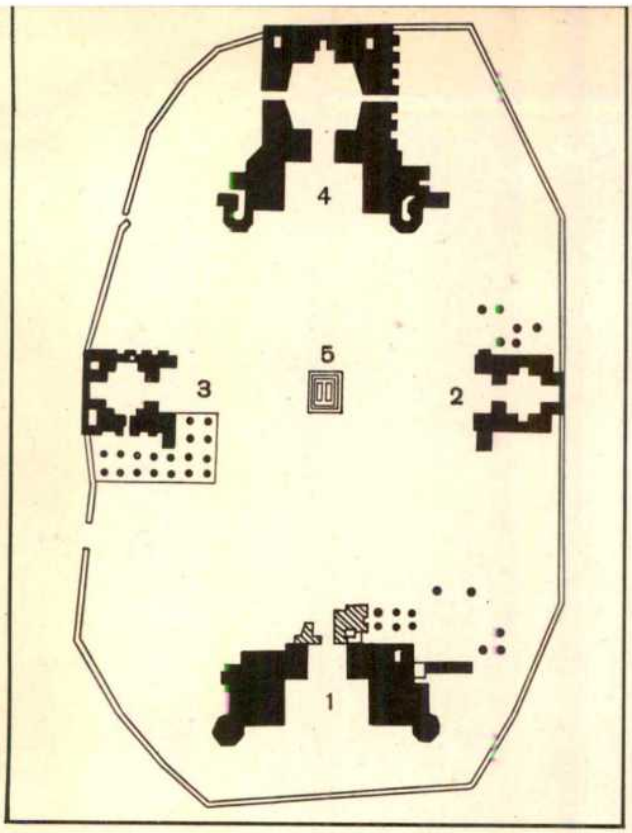
Monumental structure

The mosque is distinguished by its monumental structure. Its wide arch (about 19m.) destroyed long ago, was situated on powerful pillars, flanked by big circular pillars on the corners. The monolithic brick structures were cemented by lime mortar. Above the foundations of the porch was preserved, the wall inside the porch, which tumbled down during the earthquake of 1897 A.D. Here an inscription was found containing the date of the beginning of the construction and a geneology of Timur. The wide gates were built up with skills known in the east. There was a gold-plated bronze, obtained from seven metals, and this has survived in the courtyard of the mosque.

Main gateway and arches

The main gateway (78 meters x 64 meters) does not possess any boundaries at present, but it was once closely bound by water galleries, with deep, arched niches at the main axis in the centre of the courtyard. There was





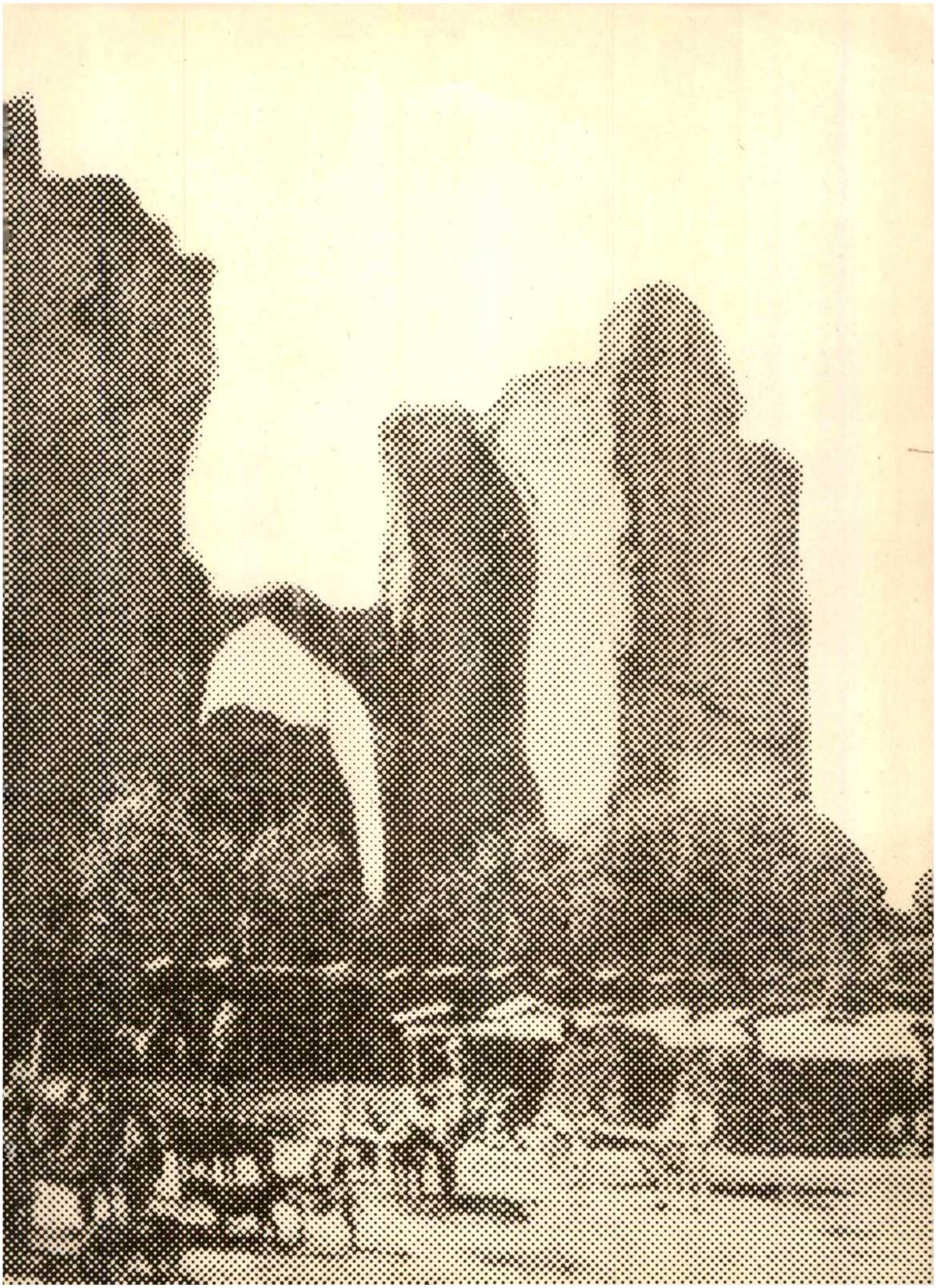
PLAN-Bibi Khanum

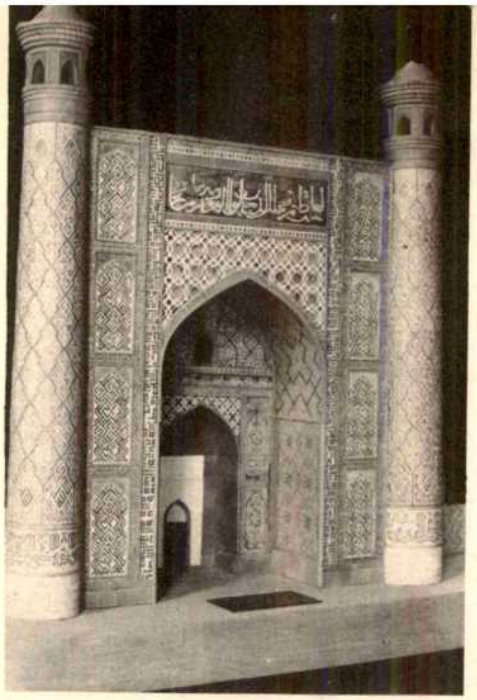
1. Entrance to Masjid of Bibi Khanum
2. & 3. Small Mosques
4. The main building (structure) of the mosque
5. The stand for the Koran

51. The ruin of the broken dome on its base presents a tragic spectacle of the fate of the grand design, perhaps through hurried craftsmanship. The embossed tilework of the calligraphy, the mat pattern of the mosaics on the wall, shows fastidious preparations for contrasting decorations.

51a. The ruins of Bibi Khanum mosque.

51a





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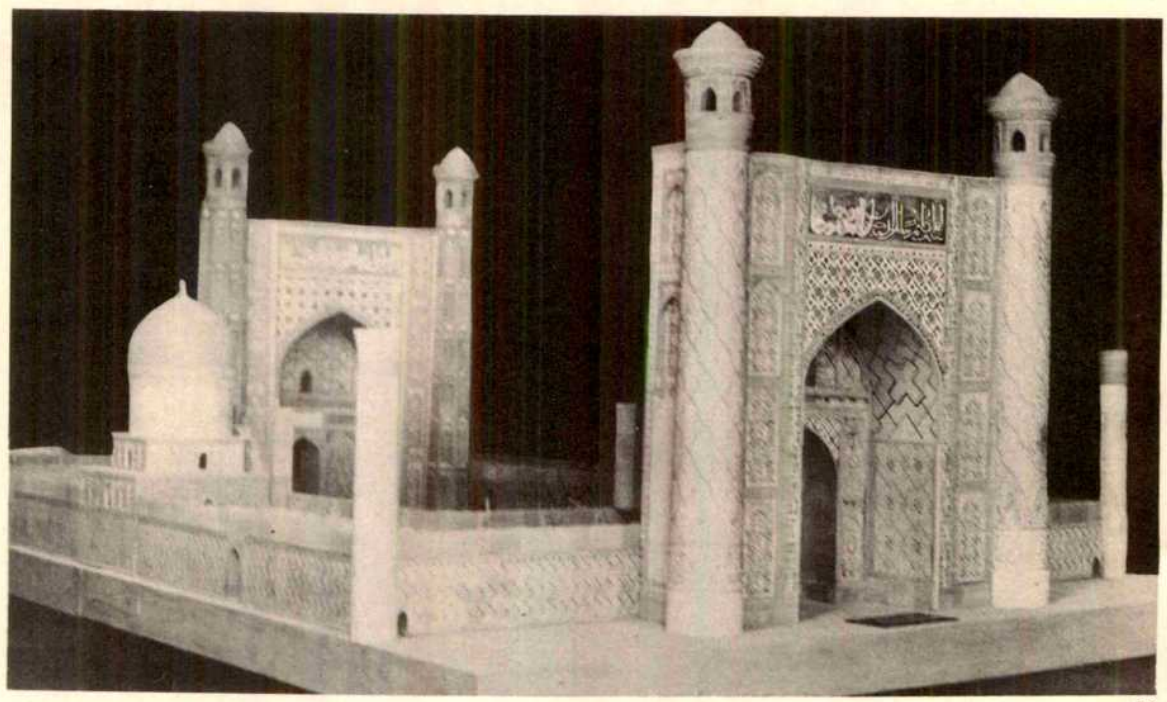
52. This model of the mosque, with its dome and gateway, built by to Timur in 1399-1404 A.D. was the greatest mosque ever built in 54. the world. We have here a perspective of the monument as it was before it collapsed. The magnificence of the design can only be noticed from this reconstruction.

55. Part of the pillar which still stands with its beautiful mosaic work.

54



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never a fixed pavilion for rituals. Now there stands a gigantic desk made up of stone, for reading the great Koran. This was constructed, we learn, from the inscription of carved ornaments, under the orders of Ulug Beg, the grandson of Timur. Portico sheds around the courtyard were built on columns and pillars. The columns are cylindrical, made up of marble, with girdles, ornamental or letter carvings. Although destroyed long ago, some of them have been obtained during excavations. There were in all 400 columns. Fallen arches and domes, in between them, once gave shelter from the intense heat and bad weather.

The main building, which is situated in the central axis of the courtyard, looks grand, with its awe-inspiring height, making it the biggest mosque ever attempted in the whole world.

The intricacies of the construction

The treatment of the monuments in the entrance group is a little different. The angles are not cylindrical, but octagonal, tapering upwards. The porchal arch was very big, upto 30m. The wide arch and its wall opened into the main premises of the mosque, quadrangular in plan, and with very tall, closed, arrowed domes. Even this height seems to have been not enough for the builders; so, on the top of the domes (inside), they built outer domes of the total height of almost 50 ft. On the cross-cut (diametrical) axis of the courtyard on the sides of

the mosque, are situated houses, smaller in dimension. They are simpler in composition, unlike the bigger houses, in terms of arches, premises, domes, etc.

The builders of the mosque began the task of construction of the mosque very carefully. The foundations were dug deep. The brick-work was monolithic. Powerful pylons and towers of portals were made for cancelling the force of the thrust of the wide arches. The changeover from the rectangular plan, up to the dome, compelled the building of intermittently occurring sail-like structures. The distribution of loads from the upper domes was thus possible, through intervening platforms, inserted inside the dome, in the form of brick ribs.

Richness of decoration

In terms of architectural value of the mosque, it has unaccountable richness, of decorative marble, in the form of plates, brick mosaics, combination of decorative plates with flowers, solid composition of mosaics on the surface of the towers, walls, arches, drums, under the domes, carved marble on the panels, footways and pavements, glazed surfaces of domes, and gold-plated painting from papier-mache on the walls — the whole cycle of decorative images, used in the fourteenth century in the central and near-east was used in the building of the monument.

Integration of decorations in the architecture

In all the decorative wealth, however, the artistic imagery does not overshadow the architecture. On the contrary, these are integrated into the construction. All the frames, inscriptions, decorations, with powerful frames in the foundation, the walls along the pavements in the system of rectangular frames, arches of different size, the circle below the dome, can be clearly seen, as also the skull-cap of the domes themselves.

55

Ornamental images are of different kinds. The geometrical design is constructed from the net rays of the stars, or multi-sided designs, in a direct position or in diagonal position. The images of the ornament are very much stilled and either go inside the completed stars, or compass cards, or the borders. Considerable amount of space is occupied by the inscriptions, lines of letters found on a number of circles which describe the ligatures. The religious writings are so many that they seem confusing. The uninitiated eye can mistake it for a pattern or a design repeating the several names of Allah, given by the Islam to the "Indivisible", the "Great", the "Merciful". Gigantic, two-meter letters have been used on the drums of the domes, giving inscriptions from the Koran, and on the entrance-portal. The inscriptions were written in such colossal letters that it was possible to read them from a distance of few kilometers, as Babur says in his memoirs.

Detailed analysis has established the composition of the mosque in terms of its proportions. In the foundations was put a net, 73 cms. long. The principles on which the pavilion was built are geometrical. The grandeur of the mosque of Timur has been obtained by its proven architectural values, rising above the building technique of that time. Contemporary writers write not of the initial years of the construction of the building, but when bricks from the top were falling on the heads of the people offering prayers. In this connection, a Samarkand citizen remarked: "O Mosque! it would have been better to call you a suppressor of prayers!"

The builders should not be blamed for the poor quality of the materials. The brickwork was cemented by a solution that could be broken even by a light stroke of the pick. It was forgotten that Samarkand is situated in the zone of frequent earthquakes, which could destroy the foundations and arches of the portals, topple the marble columns of the galleries and destroy the tall structures.

Among the people, the mosque was known under the name of *Bibi-Khanum.* The legend connects the mosque with Timur's wife, Sarai-Mulk-Hakim, who in fact built a Madrassa situated nearby. During the same year, this Madrassa was included in the group. According to modern excavators, this Madrassa used to compete with the mosque in its values, size and form. According to the desire of the builder, in the school were situated her "Mother's tomb" as also of several other relations.

In the present time, out of its numerous portals and several rich structures, only the tomb has survived. This is known as the Mausoleum of Bibi-Hakim. It is an octagonal house, with a dome in the form of a drum. The tomb has elegant mosaic pavements. The walls have retained portions of paintings, done in blue colours on white background. Here, among the ornaments, panels containing the paintings of trees, bushes and flowers can be seen. These romantic landscapes, probably describe the heavenly scenes of the Islamic 'Firdous'.

In the fifteenth century, the majestic size of the mosque of Timur and the Madrassa of Hakim, served as a solemn entry into the city from the main gate of Akhin, at which place met important international roads, symbolising the splendour of the huge empire, at the centre of which was situated, Samarkand.

GUR-EMIR

Gur-Emir

Among the group of monuments of Samarkand, which were built in the beginning of the fifteenth century, is a complex of houses constructed by Timur, in memory of his grandson, Muhammad-Sultan, popularly known as Gur-Emir. The complex includes the Madrassa of Muhammad-Sultan, situated very close to the palace of the prince. In 1403 A.D., when he died after his return from the campaign in "Little Asia", Timur issued orders to construct a majestic tomb.

Story of the monument

The story of this ensemble has been complicated by later studies in archaeology, history, and architecture. It seems that, already at the end of the fourteenth century, according to the wishes of Timur, Muhammad-Sultan built his palace near the Madrassa. The Madrassa was not very big. It had a rectangular plan and contained 29 rooms, in each of which lived two students. This school, which prepared future Sheiks or Imams, soon became a higher religious college, with spiritual accent, where the young from well-known families were brought up to prepare future warriors and administrators. In the corners of the buildings were situated four auditoriums, two of which, in the western part, were later on converted into tombs. The Madrassa was in the outer rectangular courtyard, which was connected with the house opposite. The courtyard was formed by high walls of double tier, with four deep-arched structures and four towers on the corners. In 1403 A.D. the remains of Muhammad-Sultan were temporarily buried here. And in 1405 A.D. the body of Timur himself, after his sudden end, was put next to his grandson.

Of the whole group of structures, the ruins of the southern wall are preserved, as also the foundation of the entrance portal and its arch. The surface of the portal is covered with designs, out of mosaics of bright tones and minute carvings. In the ornamentation, geometric designs, still vegetation images, and inscriptions in free calligraphy are used. And there is inscribed the name of the Master Muhammad-Ibn-Muhammad-Isfahan, perhaps one of those important artists who were brought by Timur to Samarkand from Iran.

Muhammad-Isfahan was a poor engineer. He built the walls of the courtyard almost ten meters high, but very thin. They were weak and had almost no foundation. Thus they were soon deformed and fell down.

Fine minarets were built on the corners of the courtyards, their conical tapering towers showed dynamic spiral ornament and majestic guldastas. In 1868, a painter V. V. Vereshagin made pictures of two minarets out of the four, which fell down later during an earthquake, one after the other.

On the southern side of the courtyard, two arches have been preserved. These are arches of decorative walls, in the form of quadratic frames. The painting is blue on white background.

Synthesis of style in Gur-Emir

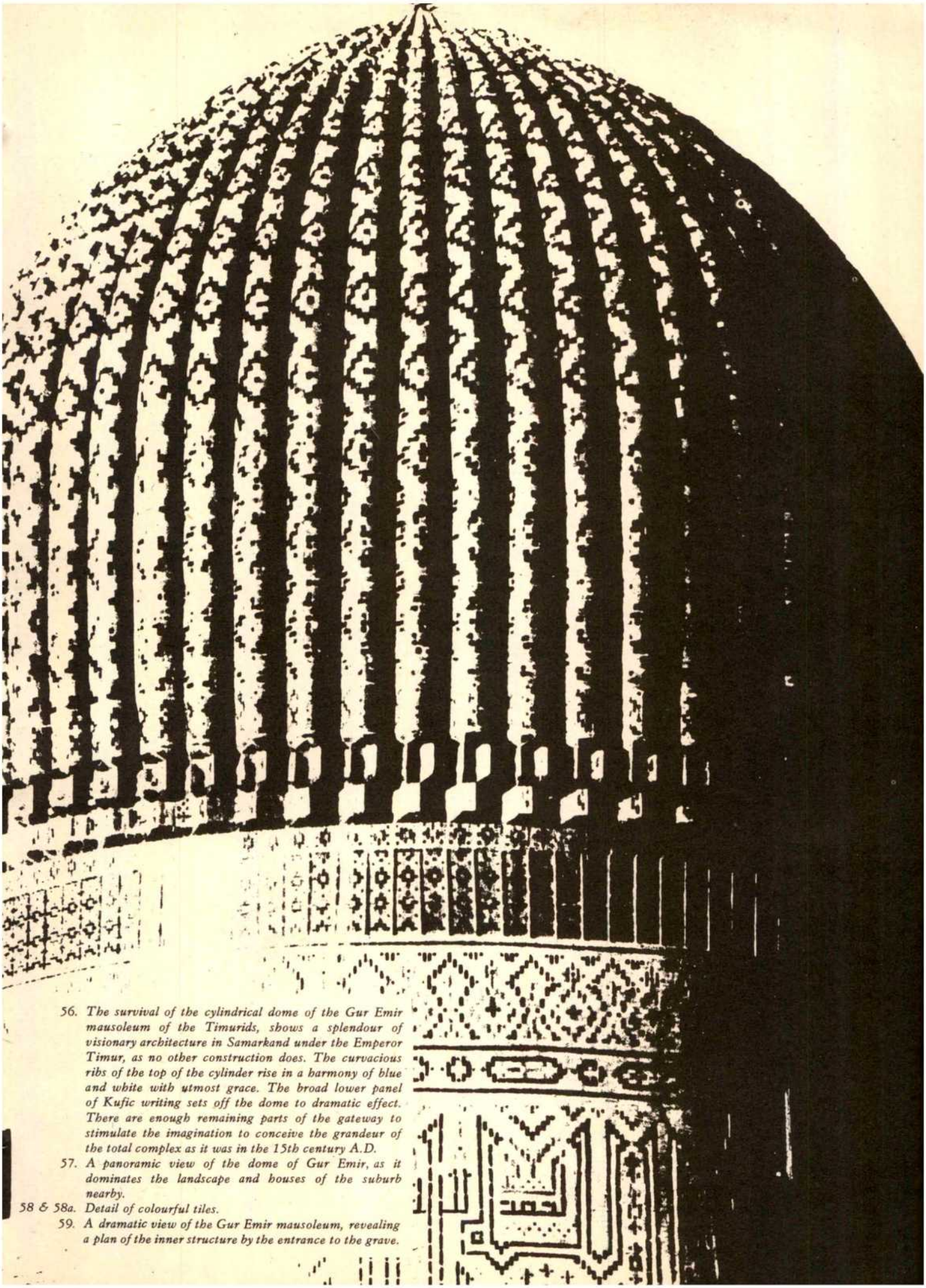
The mausoleum of Gur-Emir, situated in the southern part of the courtyard, is of a different kind. This house belongs to that synthesis, which was formed at the beginning of the fifteenth century on the basis of local Central Asian and near eastern traditions, plus those new works which came up during that time.

Its construction was started in 1403 A.D. and was completed at the end of 1404 A.D. when, on the orders of Timur, who was dissatisfied with the height of the construction, the work was continued to increase the height of the outer dome. This shows high engineering skill.

The foundation is four meters deep and is made up of quarry stones. The walls were laid on monolithic massive bricks, forming a system of brickwork supporting the outer dome. Here, there is an underground cathedral with modest tombs. In the main hall itself the decoration is prepared from valuable stones, marble and onyx, while on the tomb of Timur himself, nephrite is also used.

Fundamentalism in composition

The general composition of the mausoleum is of solemn monuments. The fundamental simplicity arises from the marble panels at the base, giving the powerful impact of the walls, with diagonally mixed up geometrical designs, repeated religious letterings on the cylindrical drum, with large two-meter calligraphy from the Koran, capped by the spherical deep blue outer dome. Inside also, there is similar fundamentalism. The portal has greenish translucent walls, with inscriptions at the top. The white top of the walls, and the arched niche,



56. *The survival of the cylindrical dome of the Gur Emir mausoleum of the Timurids, shows a splendour of visionary architecture in Samarkand under the Emperor Timur, as no other construction does. The curvacious ribs of the top of the cylinder rise in a harmony of blue and white with utmost grace. The broad lower panel of Kufic writing sets off the dome to dramatic effect. There are enough remaining parts of the gateway to stimulate the imagination to conceive the grandeur of the total complex as it was in the 15th century A.D.*

57. *A panoramic view of the dome of Gur Emir, as it dominates the landscape and houses of the suburb nearby.*

58 & 58a. *Detail of colourful tiles.*

59. *A dramatic view of the Gur Emir mausoleum, revealing a plan of the inner structure by the entrance to the grave.*

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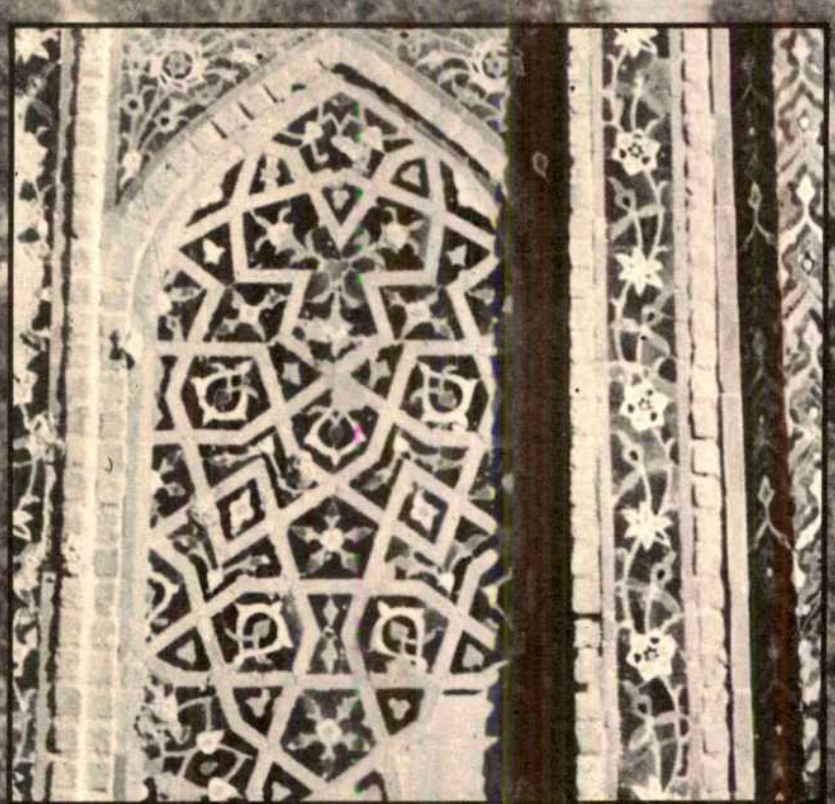

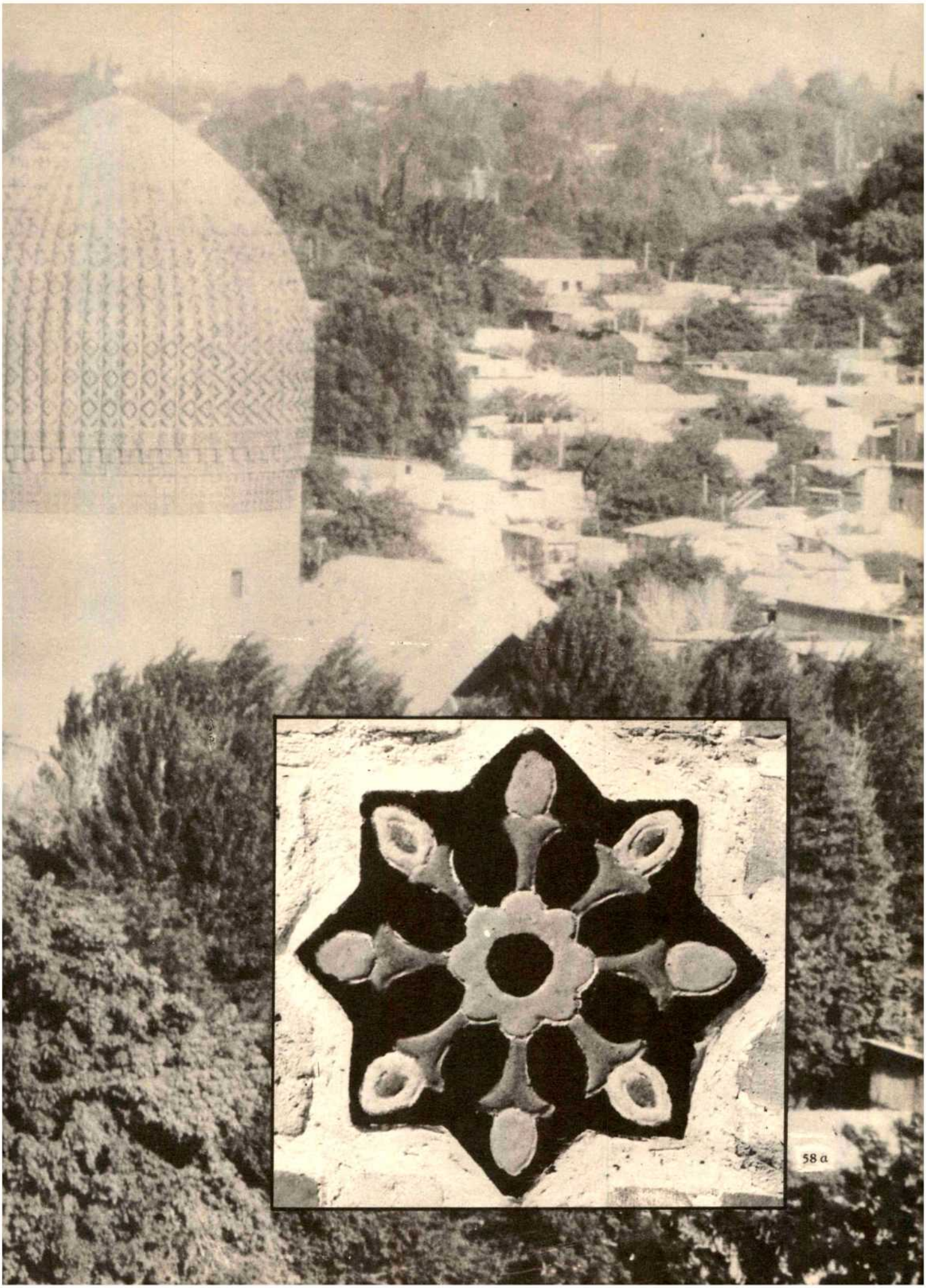

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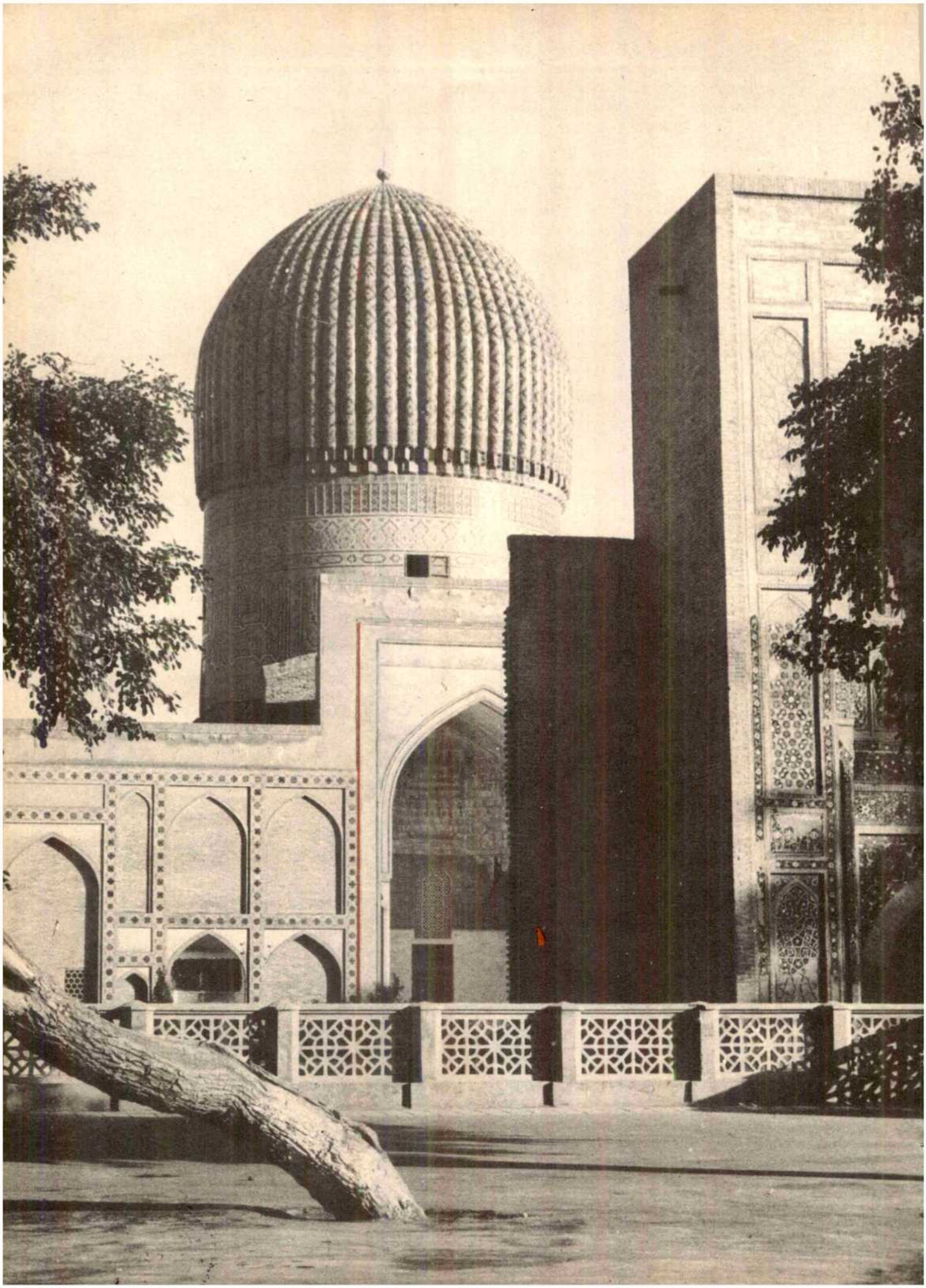


is decorated with huge ornaments, landscapes and a panel with paintings in gold colour. The surface of the internal dome, mainly covered with rose flowers in the form of pressed papers, are gold-plated. The uncontinuous grill, on the four upper windows, is completed by light glasses. The floor is made of marble plates. The construction is proportional, observing clear architectural forms.

The building of this dynastic mausoleum was completed in the middle of the fourteenth century.

bs: Mir-Syed-Bereke The first tomb is of Mir-Syed-Bereke, the spiritual mentor of Timur, built 1403-1404 A.D. The Pir was first in Andkhoe in Afghanistan from where his coffin was brought to Gur-Emir on the orders of Timur. After that, Timur's body was brought here and also that of his son, Shah Rukh.

The marble network on the boundaries of the cathedral is of Ulug Beg's reign, during which time repair work at Gur-Emir was started.

Gallery of Ulug Beg In 1424 A.D., at the eastern side of the mausoleum, was built what is called "Rakhravi-da-Romad", or gallery of Ulug Beg, which had virtually become the main entrance to the mausoleum. Mosaic panels were put on portions of the wall, modestly decorative in blue colours painted on white background. The door to the mausoleum had silver carvings by way of inscriptions. The inscription on this says: 'He is happy who refuses the gifts of the world that he whom the world refuses'.

Nephrite on Timur's Tomb In 1428 A.D., Timur's tomb was covered with nephrite, obtained from Mogulistan at the time of the campaign of Ulug Beg.

Shah Rukh Tomb In 1447 A.D., Ulug Beg ordered that the body of his father, Shah Rukh, be brought from Herat. The coffin was kept on the right side of Timur.

Miran Shah Perhaps, in the same order, parallel is the coffin of the second son of Timur, Miran Shah.

And after Ulug Beg was killed in 1449 A.D., he himself found a place at the feet of his grandfather.

Mir-Syed Omar In Gur-Emir there are some more graves. One of these is of Mir-Syed Omar, the son of Syed Kulyal. Two small coffins of children in the network may belong to teenaged sons of Ulug Beg. The stones of the grave are inferior.

Style Simple and grand in its own integral style, rich in architectural qualities, the Gur-Emir stands today as a reminder of the great achievements of the Timurid style.

Restoration In the seventeenth century, the monument of Muhammad Sultan was already in shambles. But the Madrassa was still functioning. At this time, Aurangzeb, who was a descendant of Timur, inspired by the will to unite several Central Asian kingdoms to the great Moghul Empire, started several reconstruction works at Gur-Emir. As a result, a wide brick arch was built in the south and to the west of the mausoleum. However, the work remained unfinished. Decay continued in the 18th century. At the time of appearance of the Russians, the main building of the mausoleum, two minarets, and parts of the entrance portal of the courtyard, alone had survived.

In the seventies of the nineteenth century, Russian administration undertook in Gur-Emir several repairs and during the Soviet regime, particularly in the 40s of the twentieth century, were carried out intensive restoration works.

Rukhabad During the fifteenth century the entrance to Gur-Emir was from Burkhaneddin Sagard-gi, popularly known as Rukhabad, situated 120 meters to the north. This interesting construction of the end of the fourteenth century, with spherical domes is standing even to the present day. The paved road of the Czar "Shah-Rah" starts from here. On the western side of the road is situated the mosque with wooden ceilings, while on the eastern side is a garden with a huge reservoir. The royal path ends in the portal entrance of the courtyard of the mosque of Muhammad-Sultan. Around Gur-Emir was a beautiful garden. Thus, five centuries ago could be seen one of the most fascinating corners of Timur's Samarkand where earth, water, buildings were fused in planned manner, in one of the finest architectures in the world.

REGISTAN

Place of Sand

Centuries ago, when the general life of mediaeval Samarkand was concentrated on the Afrosiab, a number of trades and handicrafts were growing in the south-west part of the fertile land outside the city. Irrigation canals were flowing through this region. Perhaps, the territory, which had been traditionally sandy, had come to be known, even in those days, as Registan (Place of Sand). From the ninth to the twelfth century, with the growth of the 'outer city', Registan happened to be almost at the centre of the artistic life of the city. And, after the Mongol massacre had brought an end to the life of Afrosiab, it became the central square of Samarkand. Since then Registan has seen many developments, with the appearance of new complexes. And the whole topography of this region has changed. The credit for its renewal should go to the resurgent time of Ulug Beg.

Old mosque of 14th century
Timur's wife Tuman-Aka Tuman-Aka orders open markethouse beginning 15th century

In the fourteenth century, Registan had a cathedral mosque, which the Timurids called the 'old' mosque, as it had been built several centuries ago. In the north was situated a structure in the cemetery of Imam Muhammad Ibn-Jafar. In the beginning of the fifteenth century, Timur's wife, Tuman-Aka, constructed a house here, called Tim Tilapkfurshan (open market house), meant for trading important merchandise. The area around this house was crowded with handicrafts, workshops and stalls.

Ulug Beg plans Registan Complex 15th century
Mosque of Alik-Kukeltash

According to the wishes of Ulug Beg, it was decided that the formation of Registan should be such that it should become the biggest and the most important square of Samarkand. In 1420 A.D., he ordered the construction of a Madrassa. In 1424 A.D., opposite to this, and on the eastern side of the square, began the construction of another monument, called Khanakah, for which special legal documents were prepared to enable the demolition of existing buildings before starting the construction of the new one. In the north side of the square were situated the big caravanserai, Mirzoi, the roads from which led to the Madrassa of Ulug Beg. In the 1430's a great Timurid money-magnate, Alik-Kukeltash, built a new Jumma Masjid in the place of the old cathedral mosque. By the side of it appeared a small mosque Mukatta, the remains of which were known in the last century under the name of the mosque of Hazarat Omar Marok.

Madrassa of Ulug Beg

In this way, between the twenties and the forties of the fifteenth century, Registan was converted into an ensemble of architectural buildings, surrounding the huge square. In the modern period, out of these structures, only the remains of Madrassa can be seen, while the others can be imagined from the little data available in ancient works.

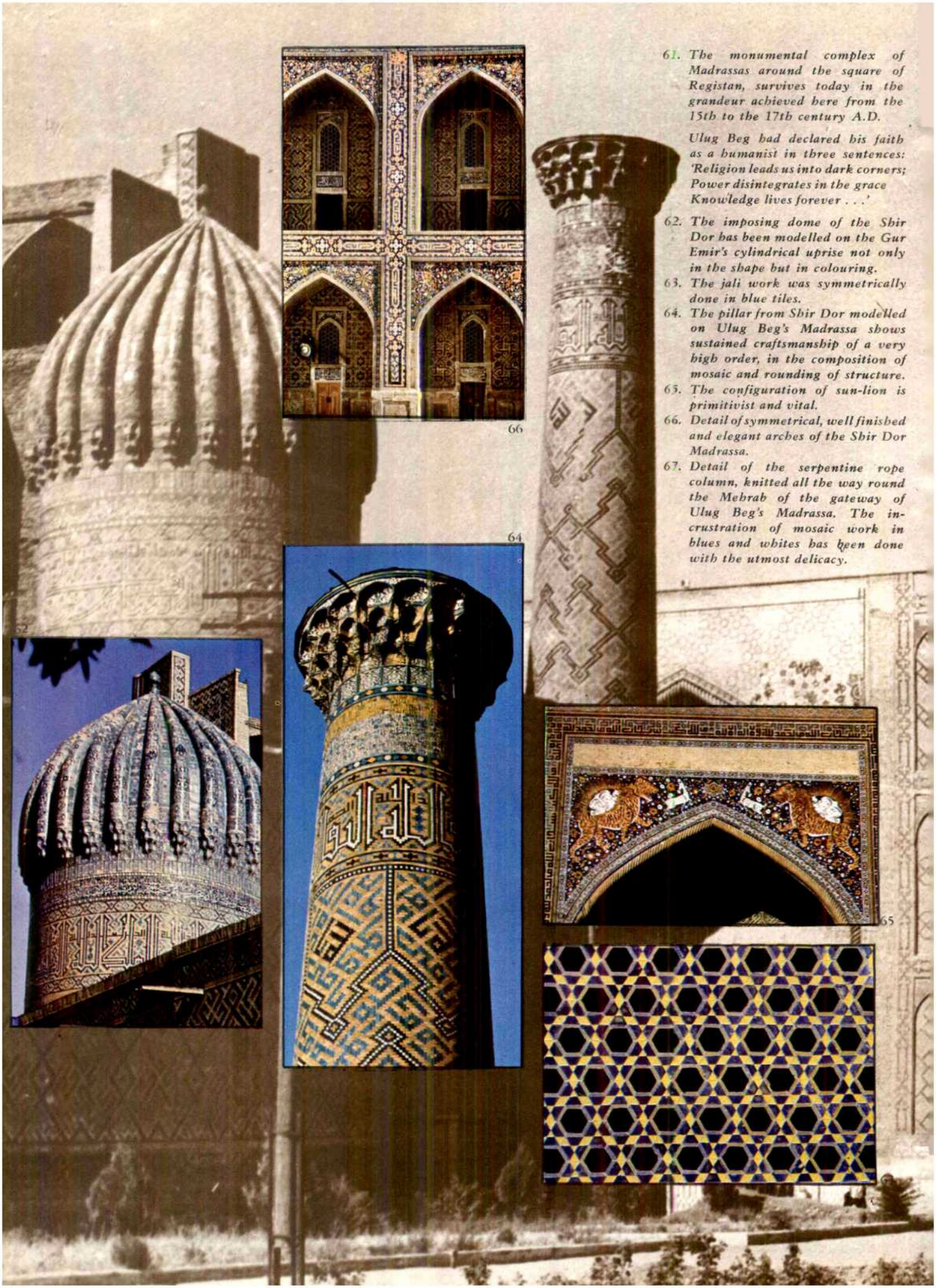
With regard to Khanakah of Ulug Beg's time, there is the evidence of Babur, who wrote that it 'possessed the biggest dome in the world'. It seems that this was not an exaggeration, as the dome was really wide and high, being an exception among the domes of Central Asia at that time. But perhaps this became the cause of its early destruction, probably through an earthquake. The caravanserai, Mirzoi, seems to have had a courtyard, with galleries and windows and stretched along the facade of the square.

The mosque of Alik-Kukeltash was rectangular about 90m. x 60m. in size, and included a wide courtyard, to which 80 arches opened around a courtyard of porticos, covered with domes, numbering two hundred and ten with a dome on the main construction. In the architectural decoration, marble frames were used. At the tops of the porticos were also marble columns.

As against this important construction, with its monumental architectural form and long lasting materials, there was situated another mosque of Mukatta, which was not big but built in good wood. It was wholly covered with carved designs and Islamic ornamentation. The mosque was oriented towards Mecca, so it did not follow the front lines of the other constructions of Registan and was situated in a corner.

The Madrassa of Ulug Beg was the only building preserved in Registan as from the fourteenth century. Various kinds of inscriptions on it gave 1420 A.D. as the date of completion of the construction, while, in some other

60. Side view of the Shir Dor showing the pillar, the dome and part of the gateway.



61. *The monumental complex of Madrassas around the square of Registan, survives today in the grandeur achieved here from the 15th to the 17th century A.D.*

Ulug Beg had declared his faith as a humanist in three sentences: 'Religion leads us into dark corners; Power disintegrates in the grace Knowledge lives forever . . .'

62. *The imposing dome of the Shir Dor has been modelled on the Gur Emir's cylindrical uprise not only in the shape but in colouring.*
63. *The jali work was symmetrically done in blue tiles.*
64. *The pillar from Shir Dor modelled on Ulug Beg's Madrassa shows sustained craftsmanship of a very high order, in the composition of mosaic and rounding of structure.*
65. *The configuration of sun-lion is primitivist and vital.*
66. *Detail of symmetrical, well finished and elegant arches of the Shir Dor Madrassa.*
67. *Detail of the serpentine rope column, knitted all the way round the Mehrab of the gateway of Ulug Beg's Madrassa. The incrustration of mosaic work in blues and whites has been done with the utmost delicacy.*

68. *Shir Dor dome and the pillar with exquisite tile work.*
69. *The one storey interior with the dome of Shir Dor has sumptuous decorations in mosaic in the prayer rooms, which suggest that the building was mainly used by the upper orders.*
70. *Ulug Beg Gateway: Styled after the Bibi Khanum gateway, the portals of Ulug Beg's Madrassa have simplified the structure by reducing it to human perspective.*
71. *Tilakari Gateway: Tilakari Madrassa conceived by Yalangtush Bahadur, got its name from its decoration in gold. This was the last 17th century structure.*
72. *Shri Dor Gateway: Modelled obviously on the Ulug Beg gateway and almost in the same measurements, it can be distinguished from the prototype by the lions with the sun figures inlaid in the mosaics.*
73. *Details of the side wall of Shir Dor, with geometrical patterns and jali work, shows adroit skill in the carrying out of precise squares and line compositions.*

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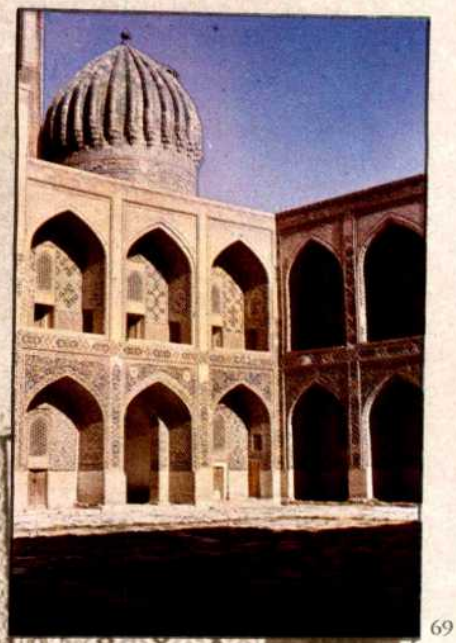

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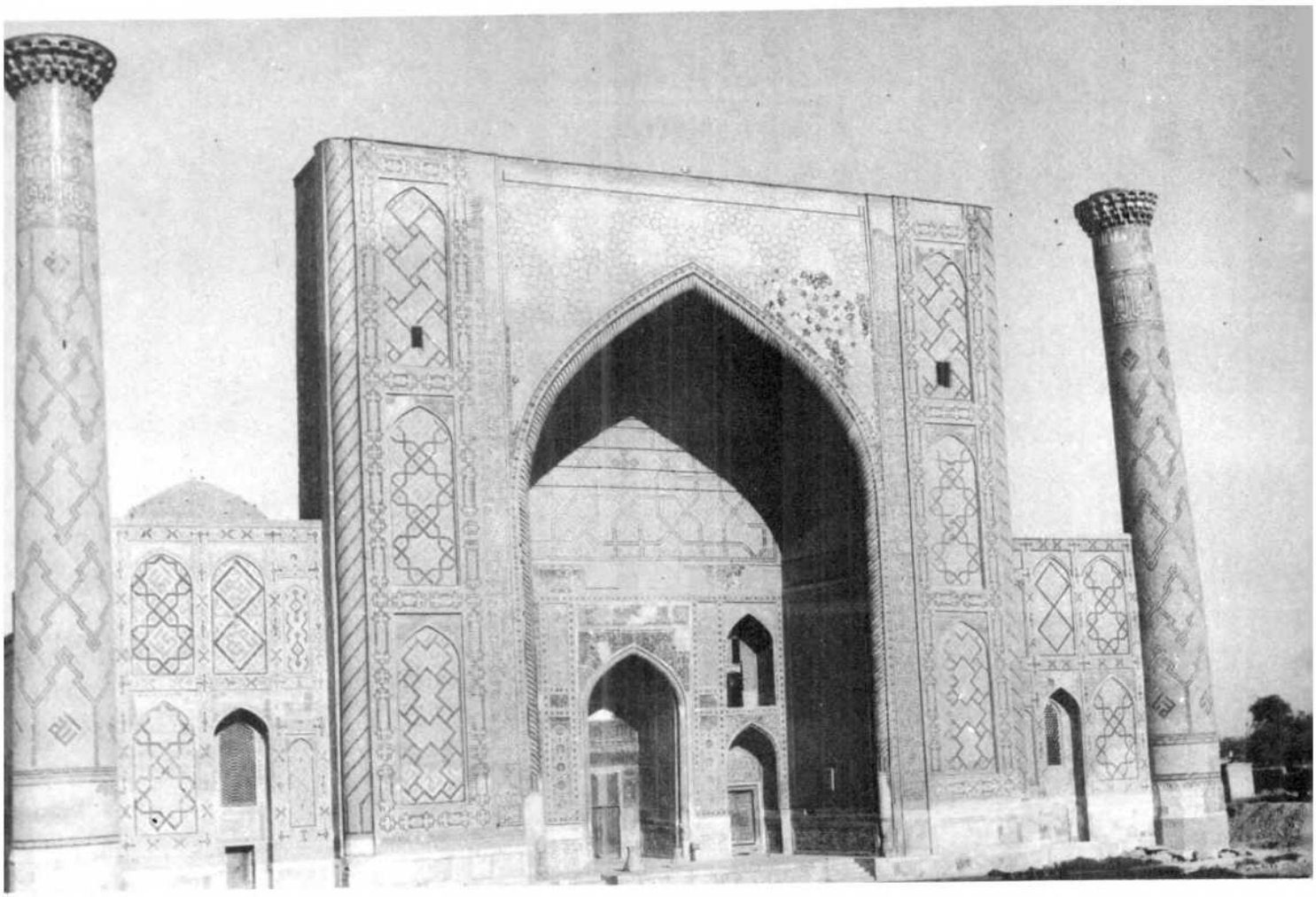

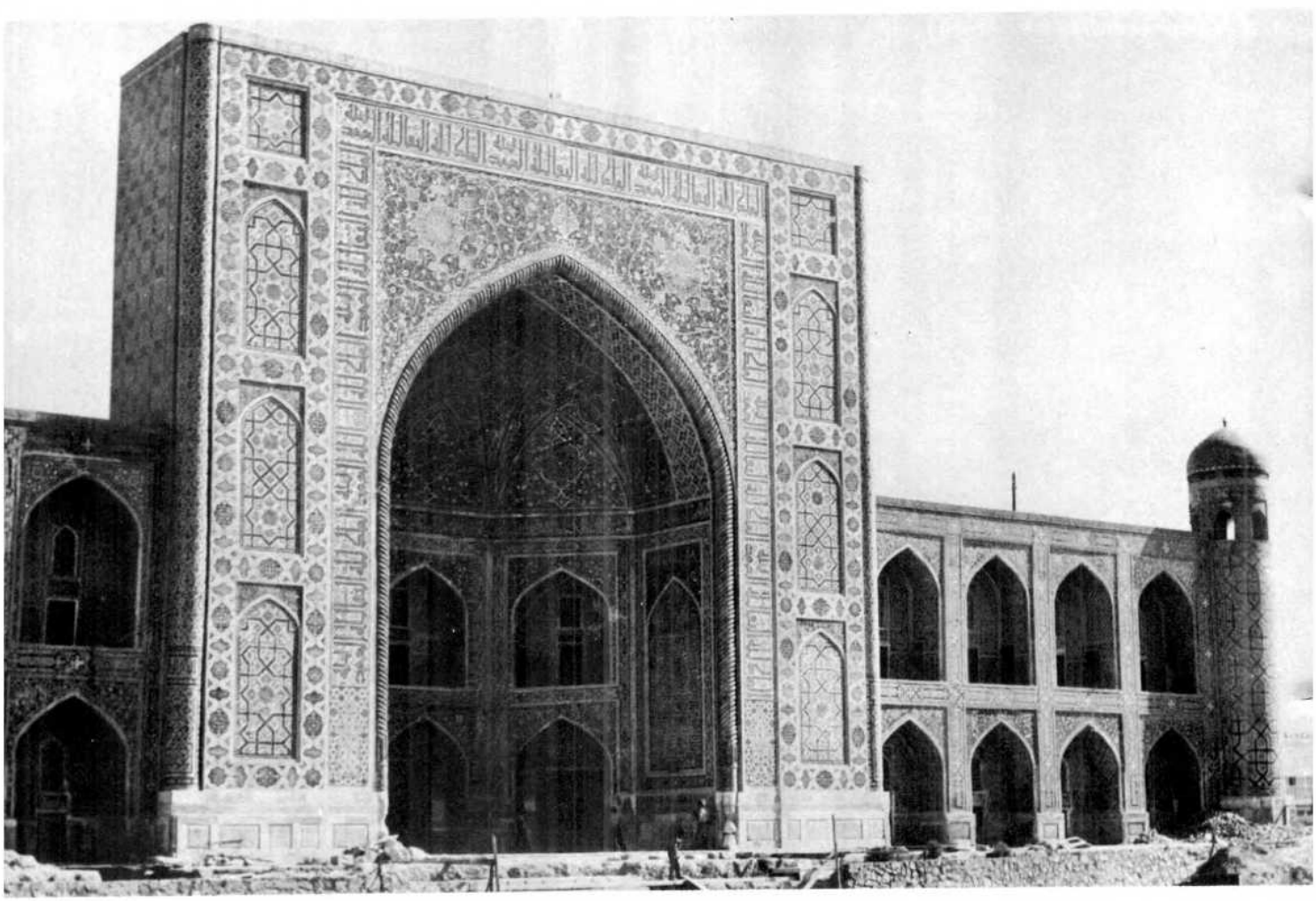

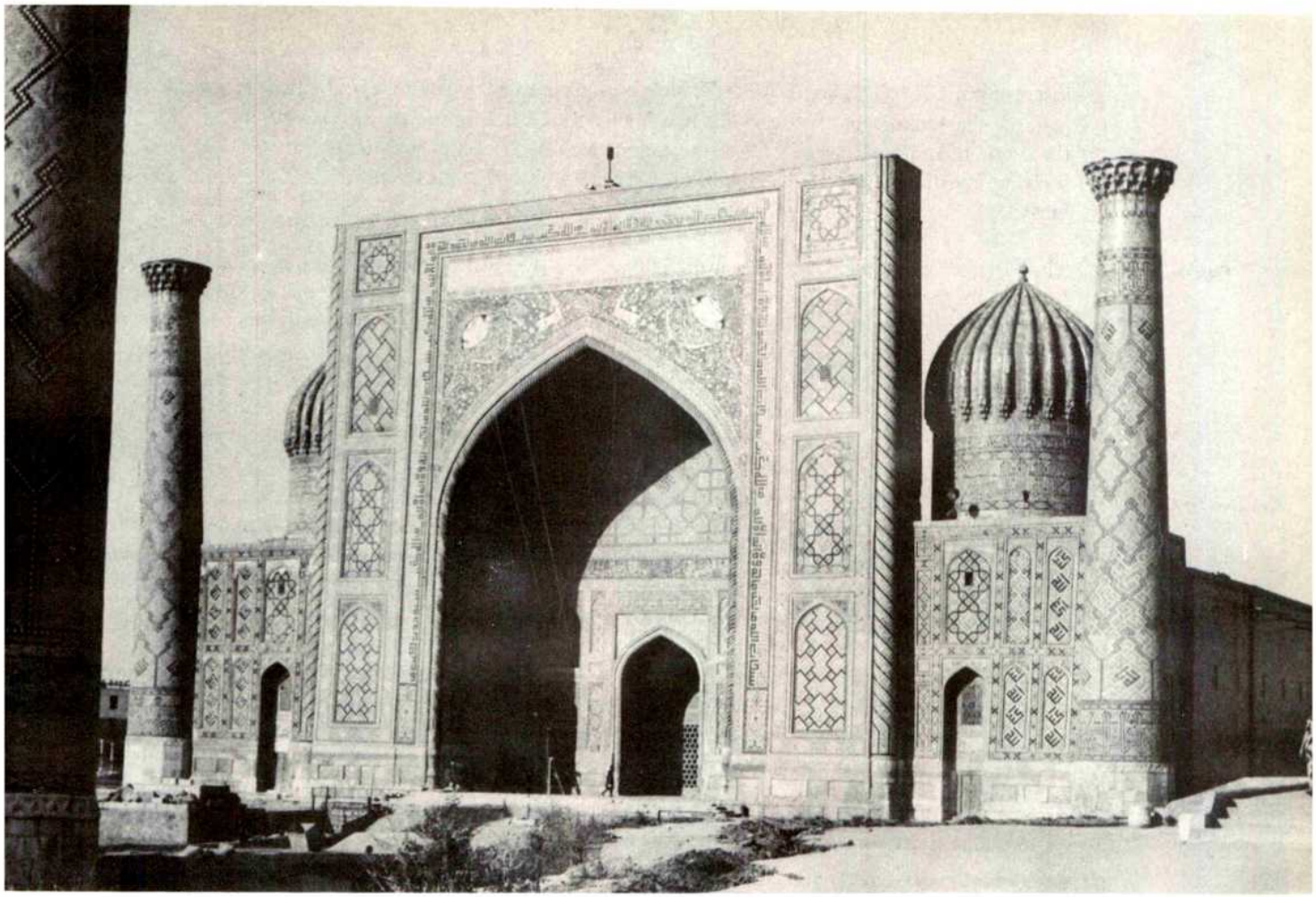

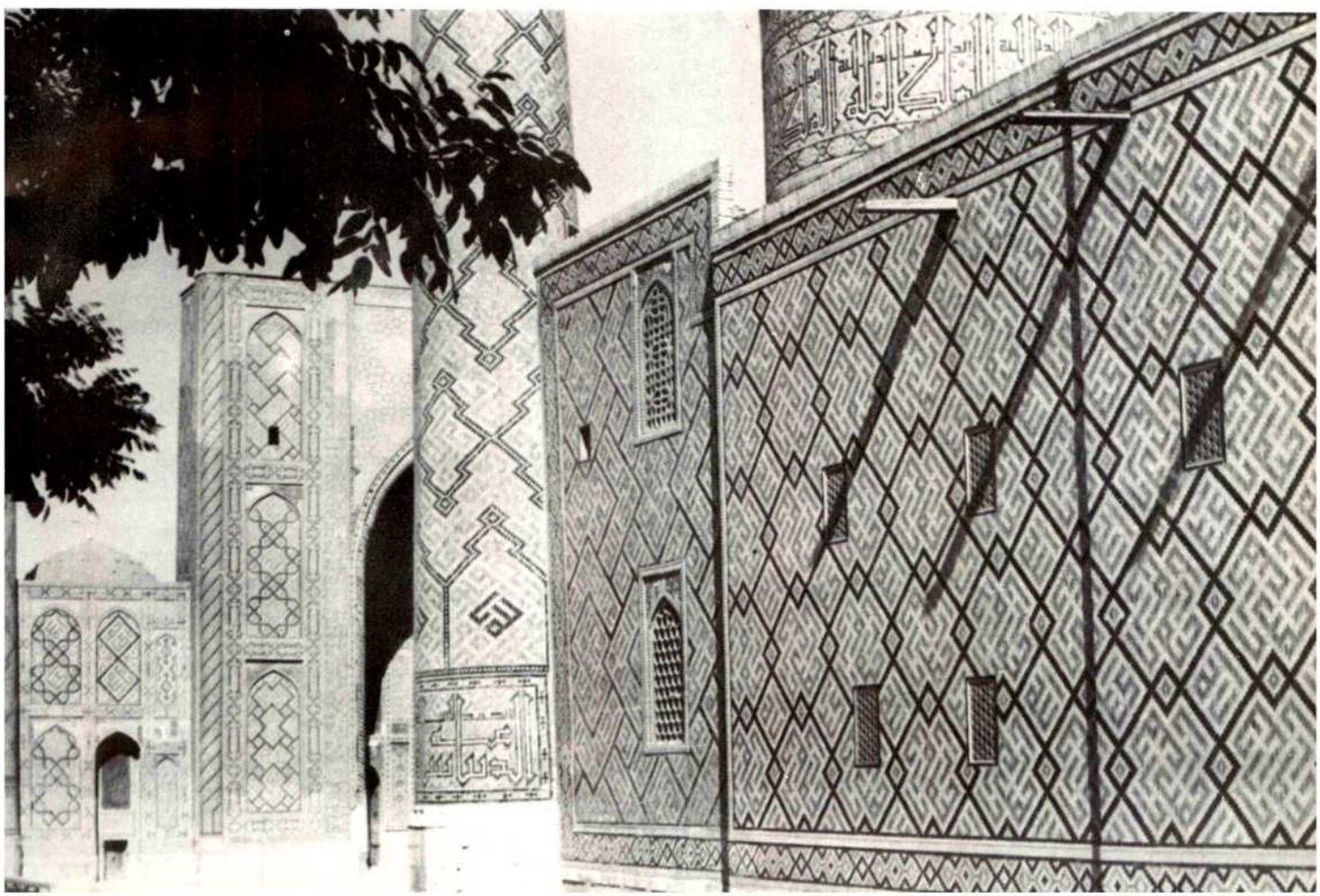

inscriptions, 1417 A.D. and 1419 A.D. have been mentioned, which may be the years of completion of those parts of the monument. It was built as a higher spiritual educational institution, and, in fact, it became the centre of spiritual-scientific ideas, through its lectures not only on theology but also on astronomy, philosophy and mathematics. Among the band of lecturers was the astronomer Kazi-Zade Rumi and Ulug Beg himself.

Rectangle plan

The Madrassa is rectangular in plan, about 81 m. x 56 m. The main facade faces the square in an arch of 16.5 m. from where the closed corridors lead to the courtyard. Around the courtyard is a two-storeyed construction with twenty-eight rooms. In the corners of the entrance, there are auditoriums with two domes. On the opposite side of the entrance is situated the winter mosque. The corners are flanked with strong minarets. Three of them are to be seen today with broken tips. There were four domes, which are now absent. Similarly, the second floor was also destroyed. The destruction came mainly in the troubled years of the 18th century. The ruins, however, leave an unforgettable impression of the majestic splendour of this building.

Composition of main facade

The composition of the main facade, facing the square, is marked by a wide arrow-like arch, two strong minarets and structures adjoining the walls. Inspite of the strong foundations, exposure for several centuries brought about the destruction of the portal arches and also of the minarets, which started giving way on the sides. A particularly serious situation was the decay to the north-west which would have been destroyed if there had not been outstanding experiments in reservation by the Soviet restorers.

Portals and walls

The portals and walls, with rectangular pans, are covered with different kinds of geometrical designs, in glazed bricks on the backgrounds of yellow colour. Marble panels pass down the walls. Special effects of the mosaic can be seen in the portal arches: the various systems of stars in patterns painted in blue on light colour backgrounds.

Minarets

The minarets of the Madrassa were very strong. The diagonal geometrical ornaments give dynamic effect. The remaining facades were formed modestly and are comparatively static. The side facade had small portals in the centre. Internal architecture has an harmonically symmetrical form. There is a wealth of frames, for glazed bricks, carved marbles and mosaics.

Grand Classical form

The grand classical form of the architecture of the Madrassa of Ulug Beg is striking. This is a particularly effective ensemble, in the group of monumental buildings, which formed the square of Registan in the fifteenth century. In the old Tadjik poetry is praise for the Madrassa as follows: "Oh, wonder of wonders!" Its grandeur surpasses the mountains, as it stands firmly holding the sky! The facade is as high as twice the height of the sky, because of its heaviness the earth trembles and shudders. The powerful master joined the high cornices in one piece with the sky arch. The immortal painter put his azure in the silver stars of the sky.

Madrassa of Abu-Said-Khan

In the twenties and thirties of the sixteenth century, the complex built up in Registan brought a new monumental construction, namely the Madrassa of Abu-Said-Khan. In the seventeenth century, this building figures under the name of Koh-Gumbaz, as the deep blue dome arose. In the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, it was called by the name of Childukteran, forty lions, of Central Asian epic poetry.

The building was a complex of many rooms and was of the same type as Ishrat Khan. The cross type plan of the tomb pavements, with thin mosaics, contained golden landscapes, covered with arches, sails, paintings with colours in which the golden tones dominated. The dome was similar to that of Gur-Emir.

Madrassa of Shir-Dor under Yalangtush Bahadur
Tillya Kari mosque
Madrassa

In the seventeenth century, at the time of decentralisation of the state, the head of Samarkand's administration was the Uzbek feudalist, Yalangtush Bahadur, from the Alchin tribe. A great and noble commander-in-chief, his life went in scattering the invaders, and he became the head of a practically semi-independent state. He concentrated huge wealth in his hands. And he competed with the other princes in building magnificent houses. During his time, Registan was built. In the place of the Khankah of Ulug Beg was built the Madrassa of Shir-Dor, while the caravanserai Mirzoi, was replaced by the Madrassa-mosque of Tillya Kari. Part of the construction material, such as bricks from the old houses, were used in the new construction.

The Madrassa Shir-Dor, built in 1619-1636 A.D., stands on the axis of the Madrassa of Ulug Beg. And in the mirror it has almost the same dimensions as the facade of Ulug Beg, similar screens of portals, strong minarets,

joined to the portals with the help of small walls, above which are situated domes and supporting structures. The inscription on the portal describe the greatness of the ruler, Yalangtush and the beauty of the construction: "He built such a Madrassa that the earth is joined with the top of the sky. The heights of the tops of the portals cannot be reached even by attaching artificial wings to the mind. The heights of the minarets cannot be reached in fantasy. When the architect constructed, with great accuracy, the arch of the portal, the sky thinking that it was the moon, bit its fingers with astonishment.'

Master builder Abdul Jabbar

The barbarities of the feudal order for centuries were relieved by beautiful constructions. Another name is preserved in the Madrassa, written in white letters on the small black background, 'Abdul Jabbar the noble'. The name serves to suggest the succession of the monument. This master builder wonderfully carried out the task of the architectural ensemble "Kosh". Repeating the facade scheme of the Madrassa of Ulug Beg, Abdul Jabbar achieved reconstruction by using sound restoration technique and gave the Madrassa individuality.

Plan of Shir-Dor

The plan of Shir-Dor is mainly derived from Ulug Beg Madrassa: four-sided courtyard, bound by two-storeyed buildings, having rooms for students (average number 54). There is no winter mosque here and only two auditoriums situated at the end. Towards the south-west is situated the cemetery of Muhammad Jajar, and on the opposite side are two comfortable rooms for teachers. The corners of the west facade are flanked by strong minarets and massive towers with Guldastas. The side facades do not possess portals. Some parts of the construction and the decorative design are excellent. For example, the sides of the courtyard have been used to effect, the dome complexes, which have been supported partly by brickwork and partly by overhangings. These half domes have been decorated by design of carved mosaics.

esigns of glazed bricks d mosaic compositions

In the architectural decoration, Shir-Dor widely uses the designs, made up of glazed bricks and mosaic compositions. Here the Ustad has observed the proportions of the building process. In the difficult task of covering the walls and arches, with separate elements, he chose huge plates whose ornaments were selected from the rectangular frames, and used at appropriate places in the whole block. As for the quality of decoration, very little comes up to the excellence of the fifteenth century. The carved elements are bigger. The dark blue colour is very much more intense. The images of ornamentation are of standard types.

'iger pouncing on deer

The main arches are constructed with particular originality. Each of them is finished with designs containing tigers, such as a tiger pouncing on a deer. Behind this image is placed the sun. Because of this, the Madrassa is known as Shir-Dor, having lions.

Tillya Kari mosque and Madrassa begun in 1646-1647 A.D.

In 1646-1647 A.D. old Yalangtush started the construction of the third building in Registan, which was meant to carry out the function, simultaneously, of Madrassa and mosque. The courtyard was almost rectangular, with three sides and in the western part was a wide winter mosque. The plan was very interesting. There is a complete symmetry. The whole house is according to the general plan of Registan. The main facade is a harmonious composition, with the central part in the form of semi-quadrangular niches, frontal wings, with two tiers. The eastern and northern sides are connected with the courtyard and are single-storeyed. The mosque, occupying the western part of the construction, possesses central premises with a dome, two galleries covered by two small domes, built on foundation walls and massive octagonal columns.

Decoration work in 1659-1660 A.D.

After going through the inscription on the marble panel in the portal arch, it seems that the decoration work was started as early as 1659-1660 A.D., but the whole construction was not completed due to some strange reason. Perhaps the outer dome of the building of the mosque was not built, though its foundations had been laid. The inside arrangement of the mosque, from the pavement upto the internal dome, was completed. There is frequent use of gold and because of this, it had a wonderful look and obtained the title of Tillya Kari (gold-plated). The figures are of different types, but considerably rougher than in the Ishrat Khan or Aka-Sarai. Similarly, the external view of the architectural decoration is rough. The brick compositions are of the same type. The carved mosaic startles the eye with dark green and sunny yellow tones. Apparently, the decay of the traditional classical style of Uzbekistan started with Shir-Dor.

Registan 'Forum of Samarkand'

The Samarkand Registan is one of the most important constructions in the urban planning art in the whole of the feudal east. The uniform facades of three of its Madrassas, occupy the square, while the square itself is included in the composition, impressing us by its fundamental axis and ample layout. The similarity of all the three buildings, the values of the architectural forms, the richness and variety of the decorations, give it a certain unique magnificence. And all these qualities suggest the internal meaning of the importance of the main square of the great city, so that as a Russian historian has remarked: Registan is the 'Forum of Samarkand!'

ABDU-DARUN, ISHRATKHAN, AK-SERAI

Abdu-Darun

The oldest part consists of the mausoleum of Abdu-Darun — a small single-room construction of rectangular plan, with a pyramid type dome on octagonal base. Its construction was done during the time of Sultan Sandjar in the twelfth century and restoration was carried out during the time of Ulug Beg in the first half of the fifteenth century. At that time, before the single-room houses, with deep arches and massive cylindrical base, on which rested non-existing domes, was a huge inscription on glazed work. These houses were themselves typical monuments, but they were built with good proportions and in clear architectural traditions of volume and form. The group of additions, perhaps added later on, are seen in the monument of Abdu-Darun from three sides. There is a narrow corridor, made up of walls of the structures on the coffins. Part of this has preserved the decorations of the glazed articles of the fifteenth century.

In front of this monument is a wide tank, built of stone walls. In the clear water, images of the trees painted in the landscape are seen. Similarly, the portal, small minarets and other parts of the mosque, survive. This mosque was built in the nineteenth century in the traditional peoples architecture of Samarkand. The premises of the machine assumes the "F" form. The construction of wooden columns, support the painted ceiling. The walls are decorated with carved designs.

There is a small Madrassa to the north of the courtyard with long but narrow open corridors, leading to the main road. The complex of Abdu-Darun suggests intimacy of architectural composition with landscape. The internal area of the courtyard includes ornamental elements, which are given by the free formation of architectural volume in a building.

Ak-Serai

At a distance of a few hundred steps towards east of Gur-Emir, stands the ruins of well-known Ak-Serai, submerged in green trees. The mausoleum is not very big, nor is it externally very impressive. Four arch-niches, three half-destroyed premises in the corners, domes decorated from inside, solidly curved top of the central building, (where, probably, no outer dome was constructed) give a bare outlook to the structure.

The composition, has, however, a number of wonderful specialities of architecture of Samarkand. Ak-Serai is connected by the people, with Timur.

The building of the tomb of the male line of the Timurids of Samarkand, constructed in the 60s or 70s of the fifteenth century, when the burial vault of Gur-Emir was already full of coffins. It is not just a coincidence, that it was placed near the complex, where the founder of the dynasty was put to rest.

First of all, the body of Abd-al-Latif, who was executed for killing his father Ulug Beg, was brought here. After this the burial vault was progressively filled upto the end of the fifteenth century. It is octagonal with a span of about 5 m. The floor and walls were decorated with light polished marble.

But the main effect of the structure is seen in the hall of cross-form of the plan.

In the foundation of the wall is 2.20 m. high, the pavement is made of minute composition of multi-flower carved mosaics. It is also almost bejewelled. The main pattern of decoration consists of diagonal network of rectangles in frame borders, with imaginary designs of trees etc. and figures of vases, from which emerge bouquets of flowers.

On the top are 'Kundals', arches and sails, identical to the ones which were used in the construction of the main hall of Ishrat-Khan. In Ak-Serai, painting has survived very well, inspite of the exposure to smokes of hearth

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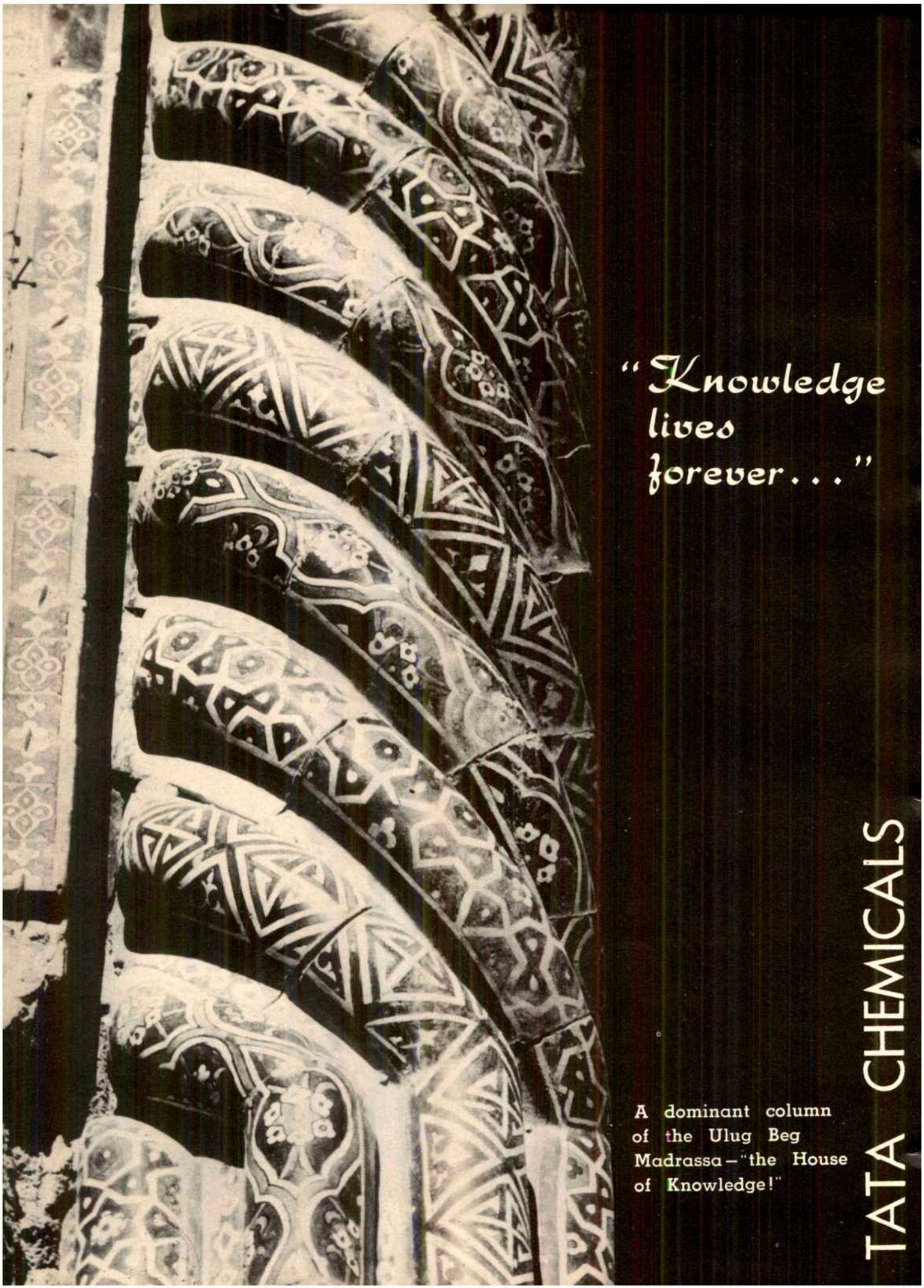
5. *The ruins showing the Ishratkhan mosque.*
6. *Part of Abdu-Darun dome.*

fires, at the time of the fall of Samarkand. The 'Kundal' painting with its soft images of gold has the whole gamut of colours, blue, lily and dark tones, anticipating the art of the miniatures.

The architectural importance is not to be overlooked. Sails, arches, walls — each form makes its unique impression. The ornament is graceful and complex in nature. Flowery images predominate with unrepeatable types of flowers. At some places are inscriptions of figures. One of the mausoleums is destroyed, while the second looks incomplete in its external appearance. Both of them are, however, valuable pearls of Central Asian architecture of the second half of the fifteenth century, the period of intensely renewed creative activities in Central Asia, known as "epoch of new things".



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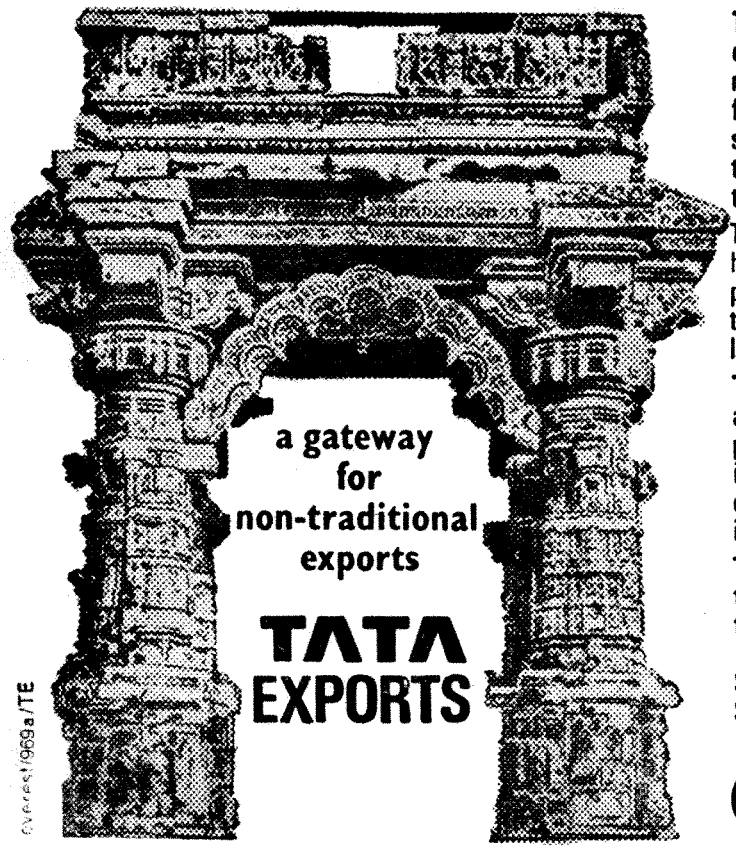

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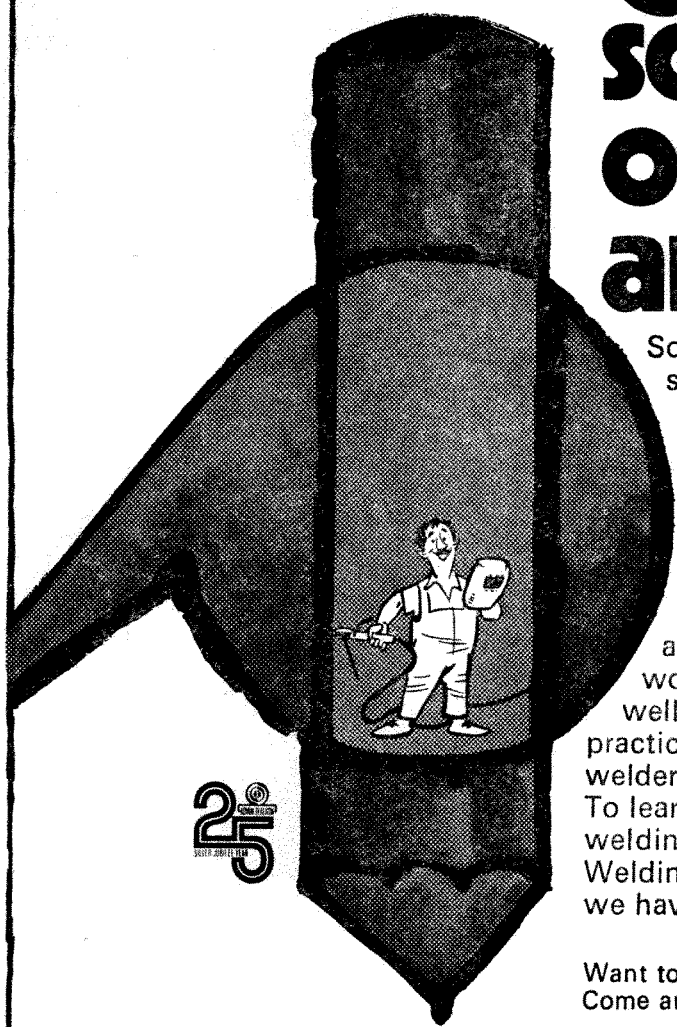

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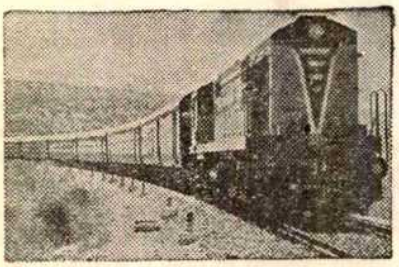

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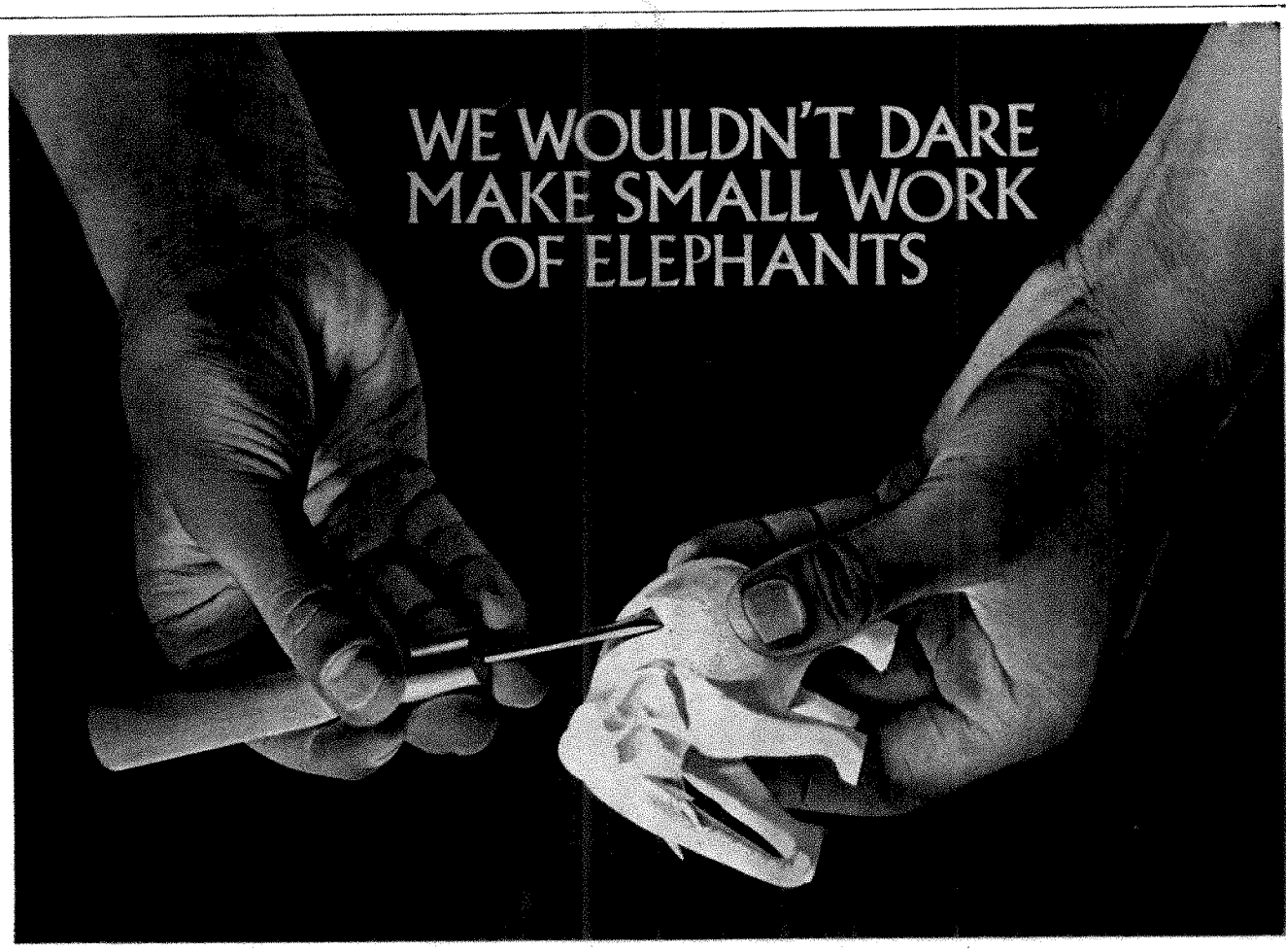

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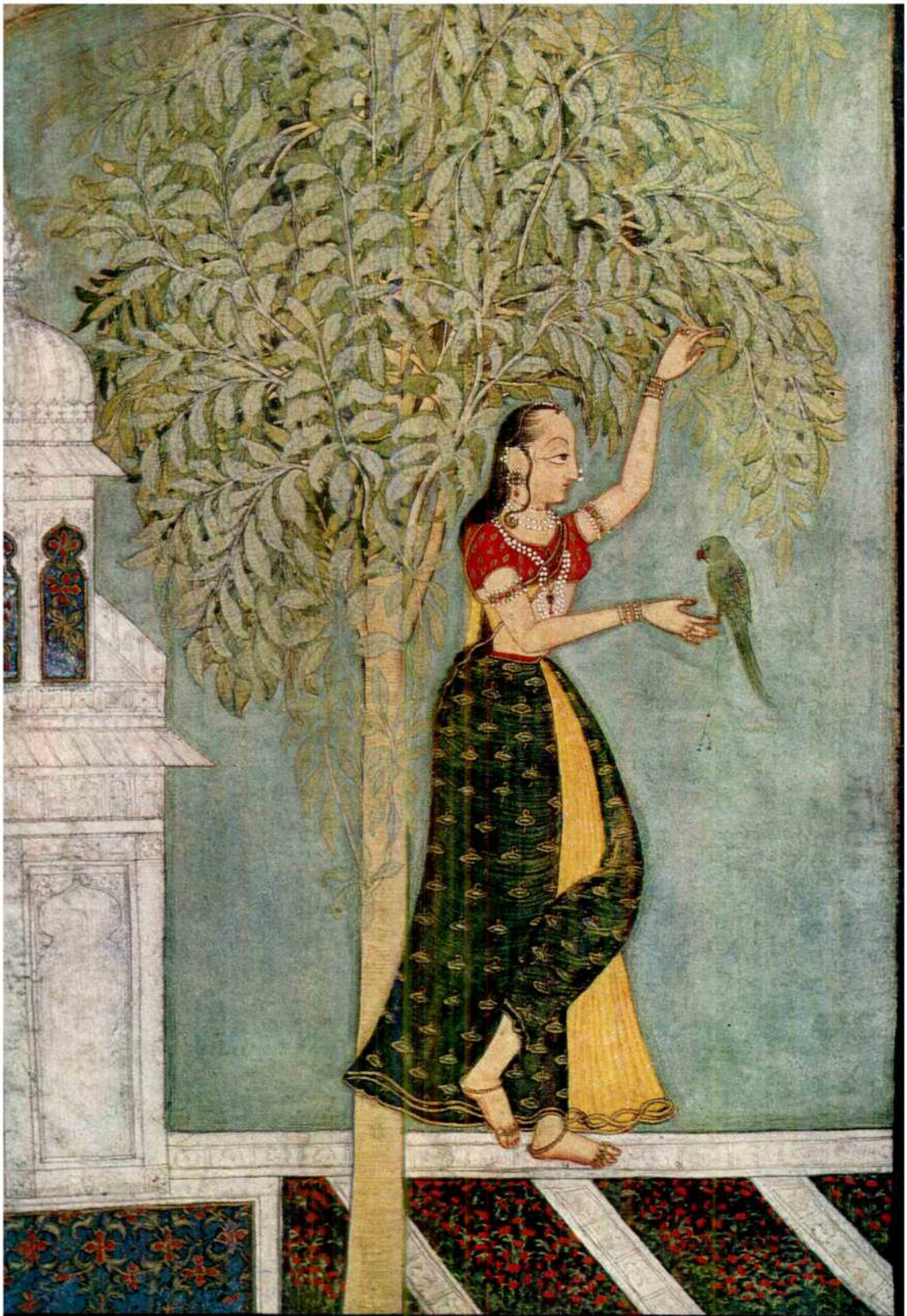


Woman with a parrot. Opaque water-colour on paper. Deccani, c. 1700

Indian Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum

by John Irwin

The Indian collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum
have some claim to be regarded as the
oldest of their kind in the world.
Their history begins in the eighteenth century,
and if one had to pinpoint a year for their formal inauguration,
the appropriate one would be 1791.

However, long before this,
retiring servants of the East India Company
had been bringing back relics or mementoes of their service in India,
and sometimes these were eventually given or bequeathed
to the Company.
By 1791 sufficient gifts of this nature
had accumulated to cause some embarrassment at East India House,
where there was no planned accommodation
for such purposes.
So the matter was discussed in a committee
and as a result it was resolved to establish
what the minutes termed an 'Oriental Repository'.
This was intended to be a sort of
private museum to house anything from stuffed birds and butterflies
to manuscripts,
and anything else that might fall
between the description of 'curiosities' and 'antiquities'.
The title later became
the 'East India Museum' and, later still, the 'Indian Museum'.

The subsequent history of the collections
could be conveniently divided into five main phases
coinciding with changes in administrative policy.
We shall review each of these in turn.

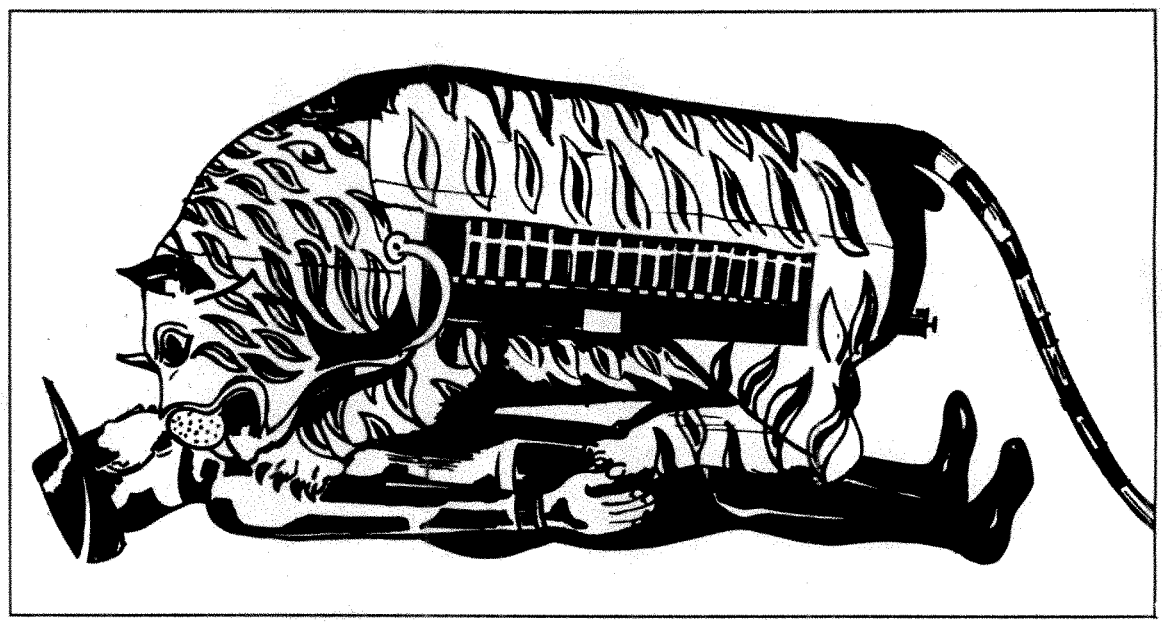
Phase I. 1791-1858

This covered the period of the private museum of the East India Company which was located at East India House in Leadenhall Street. The most prominent exhibits at this period were relics of military campaigns, including arms and armour which still today constitute an important part of the collections.

Perhaps the most famous—and certainly the most popular—of the early relics is Tipu's Tiger. It has been immortalised in English literature by John Keats who, in his satirical poem *Cap and Bells,* included a fanciful
Fig. 1 description of it. Keats had seen Tipu's Tiger in 1809 when he visited East India House to apply for a job as ship's surgeon on an East Indiaman. (Fortunately for English literature, his application was unsuccessful).

Fig. 2 Another of the important relics of this period is the 'Golden Throne of Ranjit Singh', which was sent to England on the orders of Lord Dalhousie in 1851, after the Punjab had been annexed to the British dominions.

Paintings and sculptures attracted very little interest at this time. In so far as paintings were collected at all, it was primarily for their subject-matter. Sculptures were of interest only to a small handful of the Company's servants attracted to them, not as art-lovers, but as antiquarians curious to discover something about India's then unknown history. Foremost among these antiquarians was Colonel Colin Mackenzie, the discoverer of the ruins of the Great Stupa at Amaravati. He was only just in time, because the great monument was then in the process of being quarried for rubble, most of the sculptures having already disappeared. However, he saved as much as he could of what was still left, and since there was no museum in India in which they could be deposited, he shipped the first batch to London in 1821, hoping that they would be accepted for the 'Oriental Repository'. But the offer was coldly received. At that time, there was too little interest in them to



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Tipu's Tiger. Carved wooden effigy containing an organ. Captured at the fall of Seringapatam, Mysore, 4th May, 1799. Length 178 cms.

This unusual historical relic combines the function of a wooden effigy and musical instrument. It represents a prostrate British civilian (by implication, an employee of the East India Company) being savaged by a tiger. The body of the tiger contains a pipe organ, complete with keyboard and two bellows, designed to simulate the roar of the tiger and the groans of its victim. It was made for the amusement of Tipu Sultan by special orders of the French, as anti-British propaganda. Although carved and painted by Indian craftsmen, there are indications that the organ builder was a Frenchman.

2

2 The Golden Throne of Ranjit Singh: wood and resin overlaid with thin sheet-gold. Lahore, about 1820. Brought to England under the orders of Lord Dalhousie in 1851.
The throne is traditionally associated with Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839).

justify the large amount of space they would have needed to be on permanent display. They were therefore relegated to the stables of East India House, where they remained forgotten for the next half a century. Today, as everyone knows, these great sculptures are lodged, not in the Victoria and Albert Museum, but in the British Museum: the reason for this will emerge later.

Phase II. 1858-1879

Following the abolition of the East India Company in 1858, responsibility for the collections was vested in the Secretary for State for India, and they were moved to Whitehall. Henceforth, they were no longer to remain a haphazard assemblage of voluntary gifts, but to become a properly constituted museum and library with a professional curator.

Interest at this time was focussed on handicrafts. To a large extent this interest was inspired by nostalgia for the vanishing craft traditions of the West. The Industrial Revolution and the growth of machine-manufacture had entailed decay of handicraft, and the loss of those subjective, human satisfactions which went with it. The new factories were synonymous in most people's minds with ugliness—the settings of the factories no less than the human relationships they engendered. Everyone was aware that with the decay of craft in the old sense, something precious had been lost. However, instead of working out a new aesthetic appropriate to the machine age, artists and intellectuals of the mid-nineteenth century looked back nostalgically to the place of art in medieval society: an important group of them called themselves 'Pre-Raphaelites'. Since India provided surviving evidence of a craft tradition of the kind which had once prevailed everywhere, it was especially to the example of India that the nostalgic craft-admirers turned. But a backward-looking attitude was no solution: the gap they wanted to bridge between the old handicraft tradition and modern industrial technology was in the last analysis unbridgeable. Europe had to wait another half-century to learn from the founders of the modern-art movement that, in the long term, tradition cannot be inherited. At each turning-point of history, tradition, in order to remain a living force, has to be re-created. To artists unaware of this fact, tradition easily becomes a millstone round their necks, sinking them into mediocrity, as the history of the Western academies of art so abundantly proves. The revitalisation of art in Europe's machine-age was eventually achieved by rebels who, in order to renew tradition, set out to tear it apart. These were the Cezannes, Picassos, Stravinskys, Henry Moores, and so on. Today their reputations are so secure that it is easy to forget the violence of the controversies they once provoked.

At a time when India was littered with decaying monuments, and masterpieces of sculpture were being broken up as rubble for the building of roads and railways, the opportunities for collecting and preserving such treasures were unlimited. In light of this fact the Museum's policy of concentrating on handicrafts must seem rather trivial, yet we should nonetheless be thankful that Victorian concern with handicraft resulted in the saving for posterity of many specimens that would otherwise have disappeared as expendable objects in daily use. It was during this period that Forbes Watson prepared his famous works on handloom fabrics and Baden Powell and Birdwood made their pioneer investigations into other branches of handicraft. A large part of the Museum's textile collection was acquired at this time, most of it bought directly from weavers. It has to be admitted at the same time that the bulk of it is not of a very high standard, and some of it is rather poor. This is explained by the fact that the second half of the nineteenth century was a period when the Indian handloom industry was already facing severe depression, mainly as a result of competition from the power loom.

In retrospect, we can see that the Museum was fulfilling a dual and contradictory role at this time. On the one hand, it set out to 'encourage interest in the native art-manufactures'; on the other, it was supplying factory-owners of Birmingham and Manchester with exactly the kind of market intelligence they needed to counterfeit (and thus to undersell, and finally to destroy) the very tradition it was trying at another level to foster. It is ironical to think that publication of Forbes Watson's monumental volumes on Indian handloom fabrics would not have been possible without the subsidy of Manchester factory-owners whose ultimate role was to imitate and undersell the admired handicraft products.

This phase in the history of the collections coincided with the period when the study of Indian history and archaeology was first placed on a scientific footing. This achievement was the culmination of a process which had begun in the 1830's with James Princep's unlocking of the Brahmi and Kharoshti scripts, and reached its climax with the appointment of General Alexander Cunningham as first Director-General of Archaeology in India. However, the remarkable achievements of Cunningham and his contemporaries in India had no recognisable impact on the Museum's direction at home, which continued to concentrate upon the so-called industrial arts. The next turning point in the history of the collections resulted, not from what was happening in India, but from a crisis of space in Whitehall.

Phase III. 1879-1911

As a result of the expansion of the handicraft collections, the Museum's premises at India House were now found to be inadequate and unsuitable. It was therefore resolved to disperse the collections, and to divide them among those existing educational institutions which could be expected to make best use of them. Objects of natural history were sent to the Natural History Museum, and the remainder were divided on a

basis of classification which today seems rather curious. Since India was still not recog 'fine-art' tradition (the current concept of 'Indian art' being synonymous with handicraf which constituted the bulk of the collections were sent to the Art Department of the S Museum to be united with whatever objects of Indian 'applied art' were already in the lat remainder of the old India Office collection, which we would nowadays call art, were tl 'antiquities' rather than 'art'. Since the British Museum was pre-eminently the national quities', they were sent to that institution. Chief among them were the Amaravati scul earlier mentioned, had spent nearly half a century in the stables of East India House. Paint hand, were classified as library material: these stayed in Whitehall as part of the India Offi was only a decade ago moved from its old Whitehall premises into the present building at

Museum direction during the years 1879-1911 reflected policies of the Curzon period of In retrospect, part of the aims seem to have been to foster a romantic image of the new Empire and its rich Mughal inheritance. Effort was therefore made to build up a collection of Mughal court art.

In 1880, a senior official, Mr Purdon Clark, was sent to India on a buying expedition with of £2,000 provided by the Board of Education. He returned with an odd assortment of mostly of contemporary handicrafts bought hurriedly and in bulk: they were generally le their quality than for their quantity. Yet among them were a few of the most remarka Museum possesses, including the twenty *Hamza-nama* paintings. They were said to have b the owner of a 'humble curiosity shop' on the Hawa Kadal bridge in Srinagar. The vend them to cover wooden lattice windows in order to keep out the cold in winter. He willingly for five rupees each.

Soon after this, the Museum acquired another of its greatest Mughal treasures—a famc the *Akbar-nama* containing 116 miniatures, many by the hands of Akbar's finest artists. privately, as were most of the Museum's rich collection of Mughal jades and crystals. T collected as a hobby by a military engineer of remarkable perception and pertinacity call Guthrie who died in 1875. Many of these jades and crystals Guthrie bought as mere 'h after their precious stones had been removed for separate sale. There was now slowly d more enlightened understanding of Indian art and one no longer tied to the concept of As yet, however, Hindu sculpture attracted very little sympathetic interest, and more often ed positive disdain. Among those who shared this disdain was one of the most aesthetical of his age, John Ruskin, who wrote: "If Indian art represents any living creature, it repres in some distorted and monstrous form. To all the facts and forms of nature, it wilfully and itself. . ."

To some extent, Ruskin's attitude may be explained by the fact that he had never seen Hindu sculpture. On the other hand, Ruskin, like many of his contemporaries, felt no real in his vision beyond the range of what was then regarded as the mainstream of human civilis

To the Victorians, civilisation began in the Near East with Sumer and Egypt, which gave that was Greece and Rome. This in turn produced the civilisation of Western Europe, le fortable view that Western culture was direct heir to the main forces of human progress. E that stream was somehow felt to be outside the pale.

However mistaken it may seem to-day, this attitude is historically understandable. At that no guide-rails to help evaluate unfamiliar patterns of culture. The science of anthropolo infancy; the science of psychology lay still in the future. To equate the unfamiliar with the bizarre was therefore all too easy. It was not yet generally realized that art could be app form, independently of associations which might otherwise be 'monstrous'. In order to l had to await the rediscovery of primitive art at the turn of the century — a movement whi volved with that of the Cubists in painting.

3 *Hanuman (formerly holding a lamp-tray). Bronze. From Ceylon, the work of a Tamil craftsman. 14th century A.D. or earlier. Height 76.2 cms.*
This image was perhaps the first masterpiece of Hindu bronze-casting to reach Europe. It had been owned by William Morris and was given by him to the museum in 1869. The artist has most skilfully suggested links between human and animal life, but without the least trace of sentimentality. There has been no attempt to disguise the purely monkey qualities, such as mischievousness, and even latent venom; yet we can also recognise human qualities of tenderness and humility, appropriate to the epic role of Hanuman as archetype of faithful servant.

There had, however, been a few individual exceptions to the general attitude. One of them was William Morris, poet and designer, who was perhaps the first influential artist in the West to cherish a piece of Hindu sculpture simply as a work of art. In 1869, when still in his thirties, Morris gave the Museum its first master-
Fig. 3 piece of Hindu art — the bronze image of Hanuman. It is unlikely that Ruskin had studied this bronze. If he had done so, it is difficult to believe that he would have written of Indian animal art as monstrous or debased. At the opposite extreme to this, its message is both refined and subtle. Instead of suggesting debasement of man to the level of a monkey, it seems to elevate animal-life to the level of human sensibility, and it tells us of a divine essence in all living things. The lesson was already there to be learned in 1869, but the Victorians were not yet ready to receive it.

Phase IV. 1911-1939

Morris had been ahead of his time, and it was not for another half-century that interest in Hindu art really came to the surface. Like many other new departures in the British way of life, it can be pinpointed by a letter published in *The Times* — written sometime in February 1910. The background to the letter, as well as the letter itself, is worth explaining.

In the previous month, E.B. Havell had delivered to the Royal Society of Arts a lecture entitled "Art Administration in India", in which he made a plea for the abolition of the concepts of 'fine' and 'applied' art.

> "The theory that Indian art is only admirable when applied to industrial purposes, and barbaric, or underdeveloped, in the higher flights of artistic expression, which we call the 'fine arts', is really at the root of an art teacher's difficulties in India," he said. "For as long as this proposition is maintained as the basis of educational policy it is wholly illogical and useless to attempt to teach Indian art at all."

Today these words seem elementary common sense. But to the establishment of that day they were dynamite; and it so happened that a senior member of the art Establishment was holding the chair at this lecture in the person of Sir George Birdwood, K.C.I.E., C.S.I. He could not conceal his outrage — and this in spite of the fact that Havell, keen to pay homage where it was due, had gone out of his way to compliment the chairman on the very considerable personal contribution which he had made to the study and promotion of Indian handi-craft. To Birdwood, it was an article of faith that there existed a strong line of distinction between the 'utilitarian' arts, in which he held India as supreme, and 'fine art', in which he held Indians incompetent. The latter he defined as art in its "purely and solely imaginative forms" and as expressing "the unfettered and impassioned realisation of the ideals kindled within us, by the things without us". Of the latter kind of art, he said he had "found no examples in India" during his seventy-eight years. In this crescendo to the final passionate outpouring against the lecturer the intellectual level of Birdwood's argument dropped lower and lower. Pointing to a photograph of a Buddha image which had been specially brought by Havell to the lecture-hall with the aim of inspiring his audience, Birdwood protested that "the immemorial fixed pose expressed nothing more than a senseless similitude" making it "an uninspired brazen image, vacuously squinting down its nose to its thumbs, knees, and toes". He concluded with the absurd remark that "a boiled suet pudding would serve equally well as a symbol of passionless purity and serenity of soul."

It was these emotive words which provoked the famous letter to *The Times*. The names of its signatories read like a roll-call of the enlightened liberal intellectuals of the day, including W.R. Lethaby, Walter Crane, Lawrence Houseman, William Rothenstein, T. W. Rolleston and A. E. Russell and others. With considerable restraint they wrote: "we, the undersigned artists, critics, and students of art, while giving cordially to Sir George Birdwood all the credit due to his valuable work in connection with the revival or preservation of Indian arts and crafts, think that it would be a misfortune if the criticisms just cited were to go forth to India and elsewhere as an expression of views prevalent on this subject among lovers of art in the British islands. We find in the best art of India a lofty and adequate expression of the religious emotion of the people and of their deepest thoughts on the subject of the divine. . . ."

It is significant that the case had to be stated in moral rather than aesthetic terms. It was not enough to say that Indian sculpture was worthy of study as art: it was defended as a lofty vehicle of the most refined and other worldly ideas — the very opposite of Ruskin's earlier charge that it was monstrous and debased.

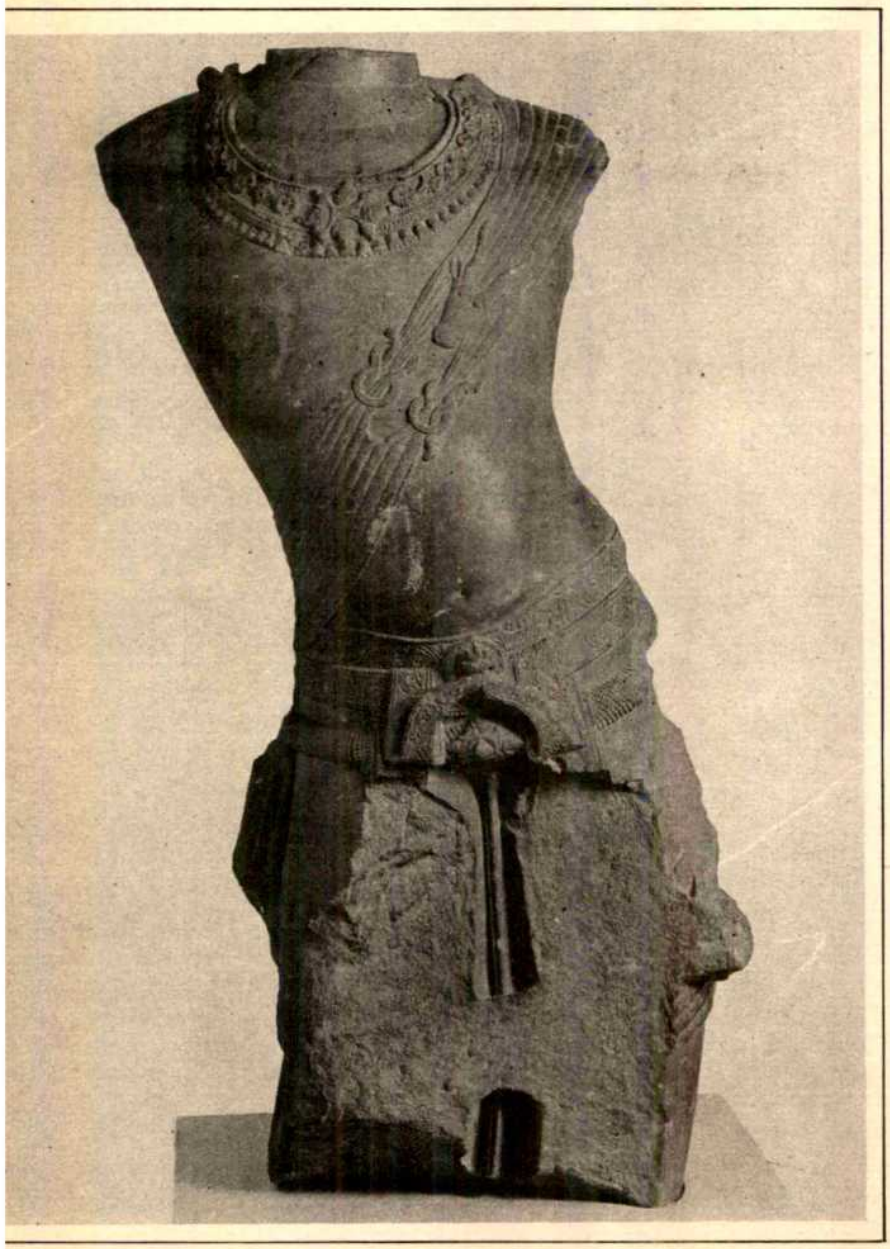
In reflecting a swing in the pendulum of taste and fashion, *The Times* letter was also a reminder that each generation had its own particular blind-spots as well as its own particular sharp-sightedness.

We are speaking now of the years when the voice of Indian nationalism was first making itself heard in the West and among people to whom India had been only a name and a legend. The British liberal conscience, pricked by awareness of what colonialism really meant, sought compensation in moral defence of what it was now prepared to recognise as the trampled values of authentic Indian culture and tradition.

If something was gained by the attitude of the signatories of the letter published in *The Times,* then a lot more about the true nature of Indian art and its rightful place in the human heritage was still obscured. We shall return to this point later. The immediate significance of the letter to *The Times* is that it marked a general awakening to the existence of a 'fine art' tradition, and henceforth the Museum's interests were focussed increasingly on sculpture and painting.

Fig. 4

The first masterpiece of sculpture bought by the Museum is now famous as 'The Sanchi Torso'. It was greatly admired by pioneers of Indian art appreciation, but perhaps mainly for the wrong reasons: it was an armless torso which reminded people of Greece and Rome. It had been brought to England in the 1880's by a certain William Kincaid on his retirement as Political Agent at the Court of Bhopal. The State of Bhopal



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4 'The Sanchi Torso'. Torso of a Bodhisattva. Sandstone. From Sanchi, c. 900 A.D. Height 86.4 cms.
This was the first masterpiece of Indian sculpture to have been bought by public funds in Britain, its acquisition dating from 1910 and coinciding with the foundation of the Royal India Society. It originally formed part of a triad in Temple 45 at Sanchi, the centrepiece of the triad being still in situ. Fragments of the Bodhisattva Maitreya, which stood on the other side, were discovered in a godown at Sanchi in 1972. An indication of how the triad originally appeared is shown at Fig. 5.

5 Isometric sketch showing probable disposition of the triad in Temple 45, Sanchi.

6 Yakshis from a Jain shrine. Red sandstone. From Mathura. Kushan dynasty, 2nd century A.D. Height 51 cms. The figures originally formed two sides of a single bracket which was part of the ornamental gateway at the approach to a Jain stupa. The figures are depicted wearing lower garments of the finest diaphanous muslin (for which India was famous in the Roman world), the gathered folds being visible at the sides, and the upper rim showing in a ridge round the hips.

included Sanchi in its territory, and Kincaid claimed that the torso had been given to him by the ruling Begum. At about the same time, news had been reaching Europe of an Indo-Hellenistic school of Buddhist art which flourished in north-west India sometime after the invasion of Alexander the Great. Since the torso was incorrectly rumoured to have once been attached to an Asokan pillar, and since Asoka reigned only half a century or so after Alexander, there seemed nothing *historically* implausible about the idea of Greek influence. Stylistically, too, its clear lines seemed to conform to the notions of 'classical art' in the Western sense of that term.

However, as we should now be able to recognise, the Hellenistic parallels are entirely adventitious. This sculpture is in fact unmistakeably Indian: the graceful, sinuous pose; the skilful balancing of masses against a curved central line, and the sensuous rendering of flesh into stone (so different from Hellenistic sculpture with its primary concern for muscle and structure). Also very Indian is the way in which the highly stylised ornament of the girdle is made to act as a foil to the naturalistic and sensuous rendering of flesh-surfaces — especially the abdomen. It is precisely this contrast of stylization and naturalism which provides the basic aesthetic tension of so much of the best Indian sculpture.

Fig. 5 The truth about the history of the Museum's Sanchi Torso was not revealed until 1972, following the discovery at Sanchi of fragments of its original 'pair' in the form of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. This in turn made it possible to identify the large seated Buddha which had originally formed the centre of the Triad, designed to occupy the shrine at Sanchi, known to archaeologists as Temple 45. All these three images were apparently carved by the same artist, about the year 900 A.D.

Fig. 6 The idea of Indian art as lofty, rarefied, and other worldly, ought to have received a shock when the Museum acquired its first Kushan sculptures in the 1920's, the best known of them being the Yakshi reproduced here. It is difficult to see how figures such as this could have been reconciled with "deepest thoughts on the subject of the divine". It would be difficult to imagine any art more earth-bound and more frankly sensuous — indeed voluptuous. This, in fact, is what much of the best Indian sculpture unquestionably is. In this case, the effect of eroticism is deliberately and skilfully contrived — for instance, in the treatment of the heavy, beaded girdle, used as a foil to sensuous modelling of the belly, and the stylised fecundity of the rounded breasts. We recognise this Yakshi as a fertility spirit whose sexuality is part and parcel of the fertility of nature — a fertility once lauded and earnestly longed for, but which now, alas, in this age of over-population, ought to fill us with trepidation!

Fig. 7 The Museum also acquired in the 1920's most of its important bronzes, the majority of which were bequests from Madras civil servants. The most important is an Avalokitesvara of the Pallava period, about 700 A.D. Dredged from a canal in the Kistna delta it belongs to the earliest stage of the famous South Indian tradition of bronze-casting, and the style having close affinity with Pallava rock-carvings (for instance, the famous Descent of the Ganges relief at Mahabalipuram).

Fig. 8 Between the two world wars, the Museum acquired two Chola Natarajas, the smaller one (hardly two feet tall) is the fine specimen reproduced here. The quality of this image impresses one the more it is studied. It is one of the best depictions of Siva in his role as Cosmic Dancer, his rhythmic movement is conceived as the source of evolution itself, generating the continual process of creation and dissolution. The artist has very effectively combined opposing moods and attitudes: fierceness with compassion, violence with tranquillity, and action with withdrawal.

Second Cover Returning now to Mughal art, the Museum in the 1920's and 1930's further enriched this part of its collection. Whereas in the 19th century, interest had been mainly in the crafts and in narrative illustration of the sixteenth century, the new emphasis of collecting was on the Jehangir and Shah Jahan periods — especially portraits and animal paintings. The animal paintings included a remarkable study of a zebra by the artist Mansur. Jahangir's diary tells us that he had obtained this beast from Abyssinia in 1621, and that he subsequently gave it to Shah Abbas of Persia. Another masterly painting by Mansur is the turkeycock. This bird had been brought to Goa by the Portuguese, and when Jahangir heard descriptions of its appearance he sent Mansur to Goa to record it. Mansur successfully expresses the strange features of this species, especially its quivering anger when embarrassed or disturbed. Note for instance, the way in which he has rendered the serrated outline of the feathers — especially the tail.

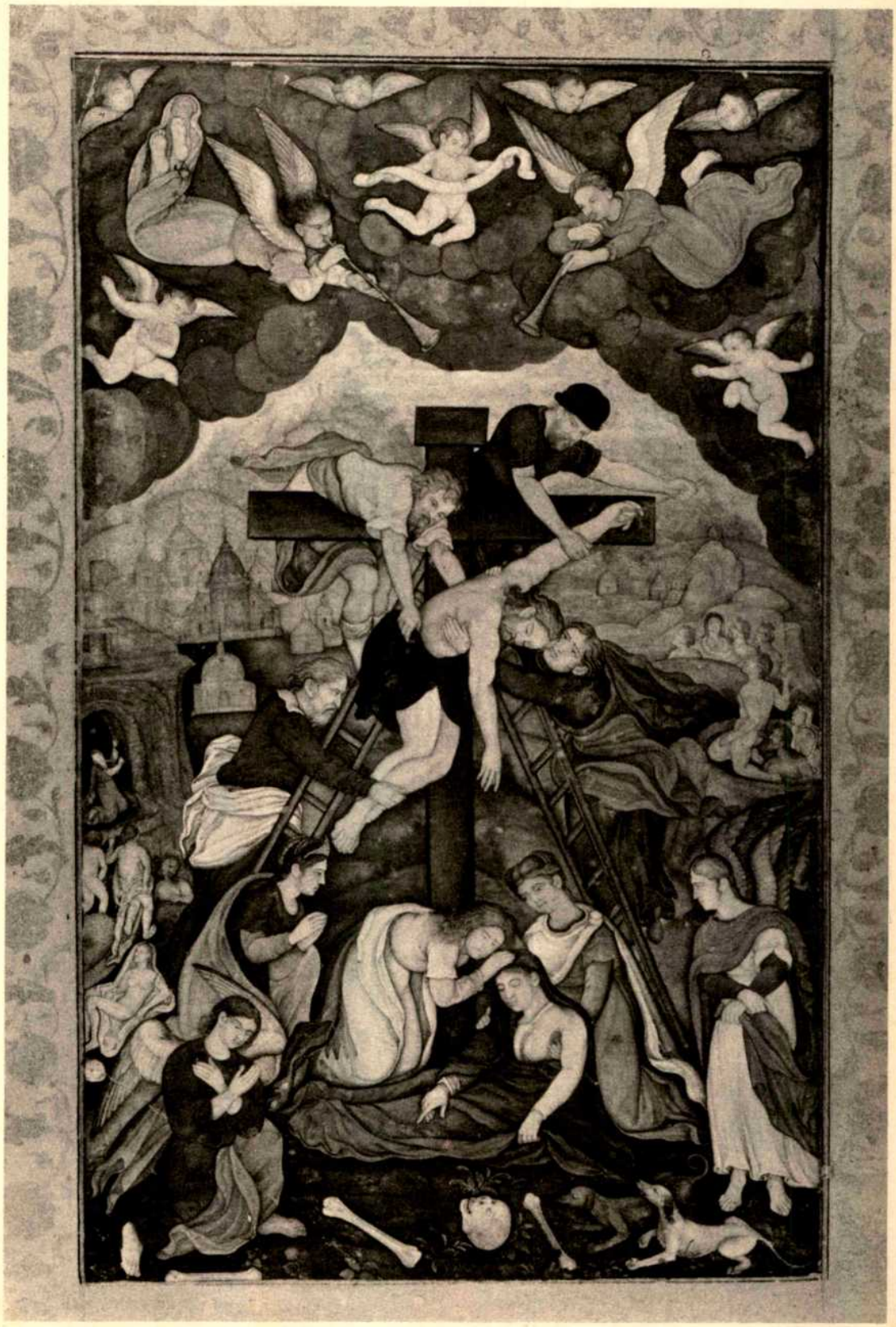
7 Avalokitesvara: bronze. Dredged from a canal in the Kistna delta, Andhra State. Pallava dynasty, about 7th century A.D. Height 15.2 cms.

7

One should perhaps also mention in this context an animal painting acquired comparatively recently as a result of the disbanding of the Spenser-Churchill collection: it depicts a dead lioness being carried home from the hunt, the animal hanging upside down with its feet tied to poles. This is a somewhat depressing subject; yet there is great nobility and pathos in the handling of the theme, so that our initial shock is purged by the artist's deeper sympathy and insight, partly conveyed through strong formal composition.

Fig. 9

Of special interest to European collectors were the attempts of Mughal artists to copy the styles of Western art. A notable example is the version of the *Descent from the Cross.* In this case the Mughal painter was working from a Flemish print, which had in turn been adapted from a painting by Raphael, now lost. It was painted at Lahore in 1598 under the personal supervision of Jahangir himself (when he was Prince Salim), the exact circumstances being recorded in a letter from one of the Jesuit priests who was witness to the scene.



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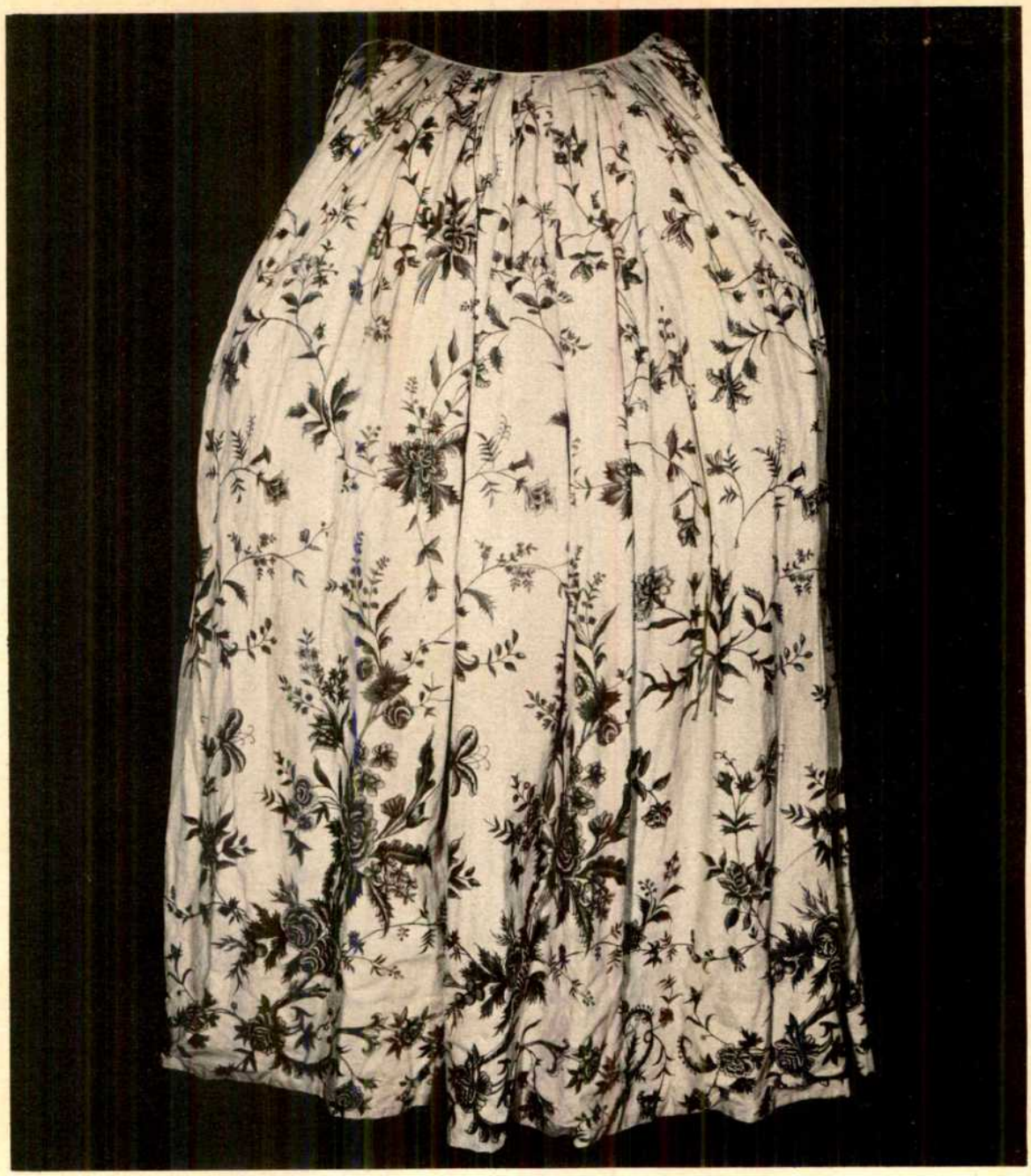
8 *Siva Nataraja. Bronze. From Madras State. Chola dynasty, 10th c A.D. Height 89 cms. This is one of the finest small images of Siva as Lord of the Dance. It was bequathed by the widow of Herbert Bradley of the Madras Civil Service (1878-1909). The artist has very successfully caught the movement of the dance while at the same time suggesting its ritual power.*

9 *The Deposition from the Cross. Mughal, about 1595. Copies by a Mughal artist from a Flemish print, which was in turn adapted from a lost painting by Raphael.*



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Phase V. 1945-1975

The opening of this phase in the history of the collections coincided with the achievement of Indian independence, and also with the great Exhibition of Indian Art held at the Royal Academy in the Winter of 1947-48 perhaps still the greatest exhibition of Indian art ever organised, and one in which the staff of the Victoria and Albert Museum was prominently involved. It is well-known that loans to this exhibition from India subsequently went to form the nucleus of the then newly founded National Museum at Delhi.

The twin-events of the Royal Academy Exhibition and the founding of the National Museum meant that, at long last, Indian art had 'arrived'. It no longer needed apologists or special advocates. From that time onwards the curatorial aims of those in charge of the Indian collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum became indistinguishable from the aims of higher education as a whole—in other words, to extend fields of human knowledge, and to conduct research in depth and in the spirit of objective human enquiry.

One could mention a number of fields of Indian art and archaeology which have occupied the staff in this spirit in the past twenty-five years. One of them is Pahari painting—an interest which was stimulated by

10 *Part of a palampore, painted and resist-dyed cotton (chintz). Made in South India (Coromandel Coast) for the European market, early 18th century. 1.880m. × 1.321m. The fusion of European and Oriental motifs is seen at its best in this painted cotton hanging. The colour scheme survives with very little fading.*

11 *The Emperor Jahangir's wine-cup. Dark green jade, formerly two-handled. Mughal, 1613 or earlier. Height 11.8 cms.*

This cup is the most elegant surviving jade associated with this ruler, and was probably made at the Mughal court after a Persian model. It is inscribed with a quatrain praising the Emperor's justice and bears the hijra *date corresponding to A.D. 1613.*

12 *The Emperor Shah Jahan's wine-cup: jade. Inscribed and dated in the 31st regnal year, A.D. 1657. Height 5.7 cms. Length 17.8 cms.*

11

12

the acquisition of the famous Rothenstein collection in the 1950's, justifiably regarded as one of the great pioneer collections in this particular field. Most of the purchases date back to the period immediately before World War I.

Another field investigated in depth has been Indo-European cotton-painting, by which is meant those painted cotton fabrics which were exported from India to Europe during the two centuries between 1600 and 1800, when India led the world in this boch of art. These Indian fabrics had a revolutionary impact on the decorative arts of Europe. So lasting has been their influence that even today most Western fabrics with floral designs continue to show traces of it, although it is now three hundred years since the Indian prototypes first reached
Fig. 10 Europe. It is not always understood that the techniques used in making these Indian chintzes has nothing to do with the cheaper and more mechanical process of handblock-printing. The designs are produced by a com-
Fig. 52 bination of mordant and resist-dyeing. They are called cotton-*paintings* because the mordants and resists were applied free-hand with the equivalent of a 'brush' or 'pen'—a process which allowed the maximum scope for individual expression. The painter, instead of being limited to exact repeats, was free to vary his effects with each cloth.

Fig. 11 Another field investigated has been Mughal jades. As earlier explained, the collections had been rich in jades since the Guthrie collection was acquired in the 19th century. Yet, until comparatively recently, extremely little was understood about their history. Moreover, the problem was a particularly tantalising one, since the instinctive response of connoisseurs of Chinese jade-carving when confronted with a masterpiece of Mughal jade, was to assume that only a Chinese would have been capable of carving it. Therefore they claimed such jades as either made in China for the Mughal market, or made by Chinese craftsmen supposedly employed at the Mughal Court. Of course those of us steeped in Indian art were never deluded by the Chinese connoisseurs: we knew all along that Mughal jades were Mughal. What we lacked was the objective evidence to prove it.

This situation was transformed in the 1960's by two events. One was the 'discovery' and acquisition by the Museum of what is now known as the "Shah Jahan Cup", which most connoisseurs at that time claimed as Chinese. The second event was the organisation of an international exhibition entitled 'Islamic Jades', which for the first time assembled all the vital evidence for placing the study of Mughal jade on a firm scientific foot-
Fig. 12 ing. The outcome was to show that the Shah Jahan cup was not only Mughal and the supreme masterpiece of all Mughal jades, but that during most of the 17th century India led China and the whole world by the excellence of its jade carving. This does not deny the obvious fact that Mughal jades embody obvious foreign influence. Much of the best Indian art of all periods has been receptive to foreign influences. One has only to think of the art of the Indus civilization, the Mauryan period, Gandhara, Kushan art, and so on. But the point to emphasise in these fields and in the present instance is the creative use India always made of such borrowings so that the aesthetic quality derived not from what was borrowed, but from the Indian vision, imagination and sensibility which fused and transformed the borrowed elements into a new whole. The fusion is so complete that it is only as an afterthought we discover precisely what has been borrowed and from where. In the case of the Shah Jahan cup, the gourd-form is derived ultimately from China; but the stress should be on *ultimately.* The influence comes not directly from China to India, but via Timurid art of Samarkand of the 15th century. One of the key-pieces in the evidence is a gourd-shaped Chinese cup which had belonged to Shah Jahan's ancestor, Ulugh Beg, two hundred years earlier, and which can now be recognised as one of the starting-points for the development of the Mughal style of jade carving. Next, one should note the acanthus leaves which decorate the base of the Shah Jahan cup. These are clearly derived from European classical tradition, transmitted via Italian Renaissance ornament. It might be claimed that even the exquisite goat-headed handle—such a miracle of jade-carving—was borrowed *as an idea* from Renaissance Italy, and in particular from Venetian grotesque ornament. But again one must stress that only the idea is borrowed. Aesthetically, the treatment is worlds apart. The aesthetic link is not with Italy but with the animal art of India—a field in which India has excelled from the earliest times.

Collaboration with other academic institutions nowadays plays an increasing part in the programme of work. The jade research was done partly in collaboration with the British Museum which jointly sponsored the Islamic Jade Exhibition. Officers of the Department frequently lecture at universities specialising in oriental studies at post-graduate level, both in Britain and on the continent, and also in America. Recently there has been increasing collaboration with institutions of higher education in India, including the Archaeological Survey of India and the National Museum. We hope and expect that in the future these trends will continue.

The Human form in Indian Sculpture

The term 'Indian art' is really as vague as the term 'European art', and European art, we must remember, includes not only the Athenian temple, the Gothic cathedral and the Renaissance palace, but also such diverse things as the Byzantine icon, the Florentine fresco and the paintings of Picasso. In its own way, Indian art is no less varied. The range of sculpture included in the exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum will do much to impress this fact. One can think of no better corrective to any narrow preconceptions of Indian art than a study of the prehistoric sculpture. This work takes us back to a civilisation in the Indus Valley that is nearly 5,000 years old. It includes two mutilated torsos from Harappa which appear strikingly familiar to the European sensibility. In fact, the general features and quality of modelling are far closer to Hellenic sculpture of more than a thousand years later, than to anything yet found at prehistoric sites in other parts of the world.

There are three stages in the development of Indian figure-sculpture in historic times; first, the Buddhist sculpture of the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.; second, the period—about the second century A.D.—when Indian iconography was first created; and third, the figure-sculpture of mediaeval India between the 7th and 14th centuries.

The Buddhist sculpture of the second and first centuries B.C.—the first of these three stages—is celebrated chiefly for the bas-relief carvings on the railings and gateways of the great Buddhist stupas or relic-shrines at Bharhut and Sanchi. We must remember that during this period European sculptors were showing great interest in the human form. The contemporary Greek craftsman and his Roman imitator, however, were concerned primarily with the human form in isolation from all surroundings. They were preoccupied with the anatomic unity of the human body, the play of the muscles and the functions of the joints.

In India, the starting-point was also humanistic. But it was a different expression of humanism. Here, the sculptor felt his own human existence as an integral part of nature. His traditional belief in reincarnation persuaded him that in an earlier life he was born an animal, and that, in a future life, he might revert to animal form. This idea aroused in him a sense of the unity of all life, and the expression of that sense is the dominant characteristic of early Buddhist sculpture. These bas-relief carvings bring before our eyes the varied life of ancient India. Flower, fruit and foliage, as well as men and animals, are all represented with a persuasion of the deep kinship uniting all living things.

In discussing Indian culture it is possible, I think, to exaggerate the priestly influence. It has been said, with sincerity and by distinguished writers, that everything India has to offer to the world proceeds from the genius of her philosophers. Today this view strikes one as out-of-date and one-sided. I do not deny the genius of Indian philosophy, nor do I underrate the achievements of the Aryan tradition from which it emerged. But I would stress that there is another approach to Indian culture, an approach infinitely more profitable when we are studying her monumental art. It is an approach, not through the metaphysical speculations of the Vedic philosophers, but through an understanding of the way of life of the ordinary people, the people who tilled the soil and sowed the crops, and every evening gathered round the village well, expressing their joys and aspirations in terms foreign to the abstract speculations of priestly India.

Above all, Indian sculpture was popular in inspiration. The significance of the Buddhist element in early Indian art is precisely that Buddhism came into existence as a revolt or protest against priestcraft and the whole priestly way of life. It sweeps across India, spreading the idea of human equality and brotherhood and calling on the individual to seek perfection in his own way, irrespective of caste or convention. From it arose that intense feeling for nature we find in the Bharhut and Sanchi reliefs; in scenes where animals as well as human beings bring flowers and other offerings in homage to the symbol of the Buddha; in the processions headed by gaily caparisoned elephants and horses; in the ponds teeming with lotuses, water-fowl and fish, with here and there a buffalo cooling itself in the water. Everywhere the treatment is full of sympathy, kinship and affection. For its period, the theme is unique in the history of art.

There is nothing hieratic in this early Indian art, nor is there anything that demands the vague word 'spiritual'. All living things are rendered with an acute consciousness of, and delight in, their real existence; reflecting an attitude to life in which any dualism between spirit and matter, or between the mystic and the sensual, is inconceivable. In seeking mass support in its struggle against Brahmanism, the Buddhist movement prepared the way for a release of popular forces which were eventually to transform its original character. From being a monastic order, it became a popular religion with a cult, incorporating the beliefs, practices and modes of worship characteristic of the traditional cults of the soil. The Yakshas, Yakshis, Nagas, and other godlings carved on the railings and gateways at Bharhut and Sanchi are the age-old fertility spirits of village-India. Their conception owes little to hieratic canons. They are godlings of a human world whose power one feels does not extend beyond the shadows of the trees to which they cling, and which are their abode. The sculpture was intended to be purely monumental. The Buddha himself never appeared in human form, but was represented by symbols such as footprints or a vacant throne.

The worship of the Indian image first began three or four hundred years later, about the second century A.D. Its appearance coincided with fundamental changes in Indian religious outlook. At this time, the people were disillusioned by conditions of increasing exploitation and had lost faith in their secular faiths. In place of the early humanism, there arose a widespread aspiration for a transcendant faith, a faith which would deliver them from the miseries of their earthly existence and promised universal mercy and redemption. The Buddha had formerly been regarded as an ordinary human being preaching an ethical doctrine, but now he is elevated to divine status as a 'Saviour'. These changes were reflected by the popular demand for the image in worship. And in sculpture they resulted in the creation of Indian iconography.

The main problem the sculptor had to solve for his new work was how to standardise an image. In portraying the Buddha this involved special difficulties, such as representing the skull—protuberance or ushanisha—the distinghishing mark with which the Buddha was said to have been born. By the sixth century A.D., however, most of these difficulties had been solved, and we reached what is sometimes known as the 'classical' period in Indian art. The magnificent Buddha images carved in the round belong to this period. They are distinguished by an element of refinement or clear definition, admirably suited to the subtle poise and gesture evolved by the iconographical convention. The famous piece of sculpture known as the Sanchi torso now on view at the Victoria and Albert Museum is one of the great masterpieces of this period.

It is significant that the heretical religious movements like Buddhism and Jainism which originally represented a revolt against priest-craft themselves became institutional religions under hieratic domination. The main reason for these changes was an indirect one. It was the decline in India's foreign trade. With the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West and the disintegration of the Han dynasty in China, Indian trade had been compelled to turn inwards. That meant the establishment of a relatively static, semi-feudal social order. Rights over land became the main source of power and influence, and social relations crystallised into caste divisions, based on craft-occupation.

Mediaeval Indian art takes colour from these changes. The tradition becomes literary and scholastic, and is characterised by a new intellectual discipline. But it would be wrong to suggest that the initiative came from the new priesthood. The priests were not yet powerful enough to dominate religious life. Complete freedom was still left for communal expression. Instead of trying to impose their ideas on the people, the priests accepted the popular myths of the soil, and, in the process of assimilation gradually transformed them to their own ends. The great rock-cut temples at Ajanta, Ellora, Badami and Aurangabad belong to this period, roughly between the 6th and 8th centuries A.D. In the restful, unchanging half-light of these rock-cut temples, we find perfectly represented that rich symbolisation of natural form and motifs which is perhaps the most outstanding single feature of mediaeval Indian sculpture. The climax of the rock-cutting tradition is reached at Ellora, in the carving of the eighth century Kailasa temple. Here a new vitality is asserted in the treatment of the human form. The sculptors try to create the effect of movement and cut their figures in deep relief in order to achieve this end. This art is drawn directly from nature and firmly based in the sensuous fullness of life, but it is never naturalistic in the narrow imitative sense. There is no intended feeling of flesh, but only of stone; and the animation that seems to spring from these sculptured figures does not come from any mere linear dexterity but from energies revealed in the rock itself—and the play of light upon it.

There is no contradiction in the fact that this sculpture is at the same time an art conspicuous for its iconographical convention and for its astonishing life-quality. Of course the rules of iconography were of the utmost

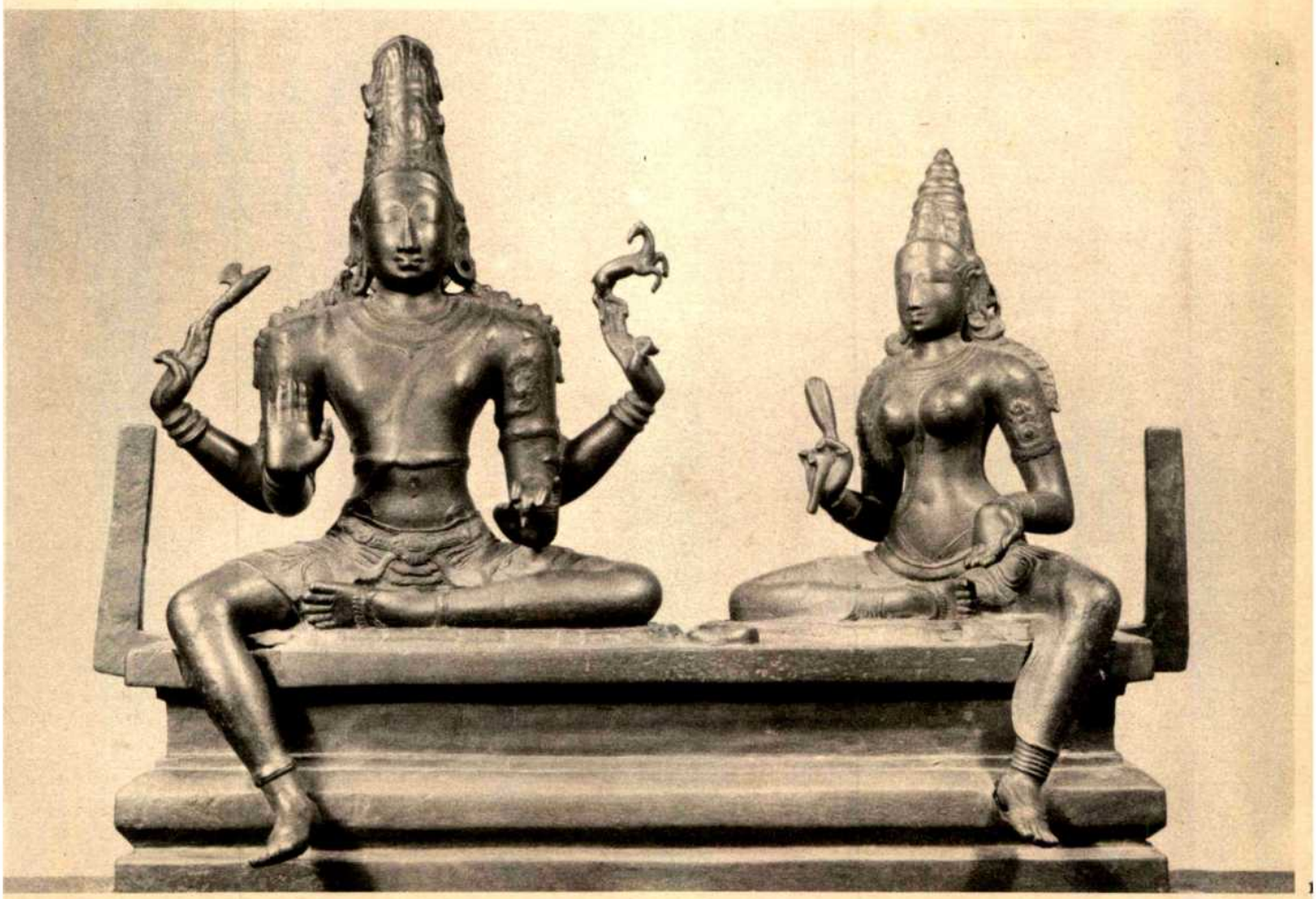
importance to the mediaeval Indian sculptor, no less than to his contemporary in Europe. The main point, however, is that they were important not as conventional imperatives imposed from without, but as living symbols in a community culture. In such art, iconographical conventions are not to be confused with the *conception* of a work of art; they are no more than the *matter* of the conception. It is true that at a later stage, a stereotyped iconography did develop under literary influence and reduced Indian sculpture to something lifeless. But this marks the period of decline in Indian mediaeval art.

Most of what I have said is about the rock-cut sculpture temples of mediaeval India. But generally architecture and sculpture are one and indivisible. The sculpture serves an integral function in the design of the temple. The numerous carved figures which appear to clamber, often in contortionate attitudes, on its outside walls are there for a definite architectural purpose. Their apparent mobility serves as a foil to the static or symmetrical elements in the design. It makes possible that interplay between the mobile and the static which is the characteristic feature of Indian temple architecture.

It has often been said that the appreciation of art demands 'a state of passive receptiveness', and that art's worst enemy is the faculty of association. I have no quarrel with those who hold this view, but I would suggest that such an approach is permissible only when we are conscious of its limitations. In India, this approach will not be of much help. To analyse Indian sculpture in terms of pure form is to search for static elements in an art that is above all vital. Indian art does not often share the superficial charm of the art of the Far East—China and Japan. Far Eastern art can be appreciated even if its deeper significance is ignored. But in India, the tradition is too well founded in the sum of experiences that is human life. There, qualities are held to exist only as stupid preferences, and intensity is alone satisfying. To learn to love Indian art is to learn to love India, the colour, music and laughter of village life.

—John Irwin

13 Somaskanda (Siva, Uma and Skanda—the latter image now missing). Bronze. From Madras State, probably Tanjore-Pudukottai region. Chola dynasty, about 1000 A.D. Height 47 cms.



14 *Winged Lion, with serpent's tail. Sandstone. From Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. Kushan dynasty; 2nd century A.D. Height 88.9 cms.*
A guardian figure from the approach to a Buddhist or Jain stupa *or relic mound.*

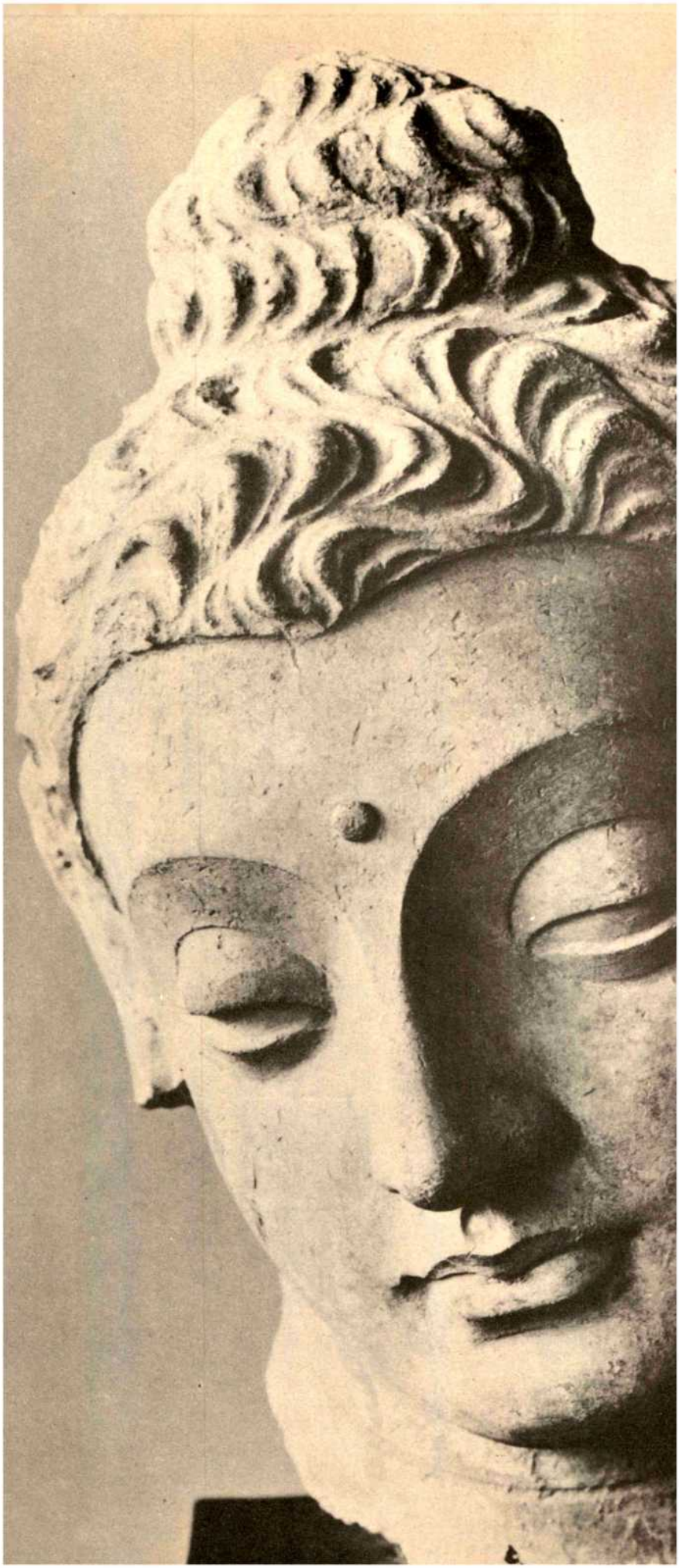
14

15 *Fragment of a relief scene depicting the Parinirvana or Passing of the Buddha. Schist. From Gandhara, 2nd-4th century A.D. Length 122 cms.*
The figure of the Buddha, which is not visible in this fragment, lay on the draped bier behind the five mourning figures. The gestures and dispositions of the figures, as well as the treatment of the costume, owe much to Hellenistic art, yet the Indian contribution is equally obvious, especially in the treatment of the monk meditating beside the tripod.

16

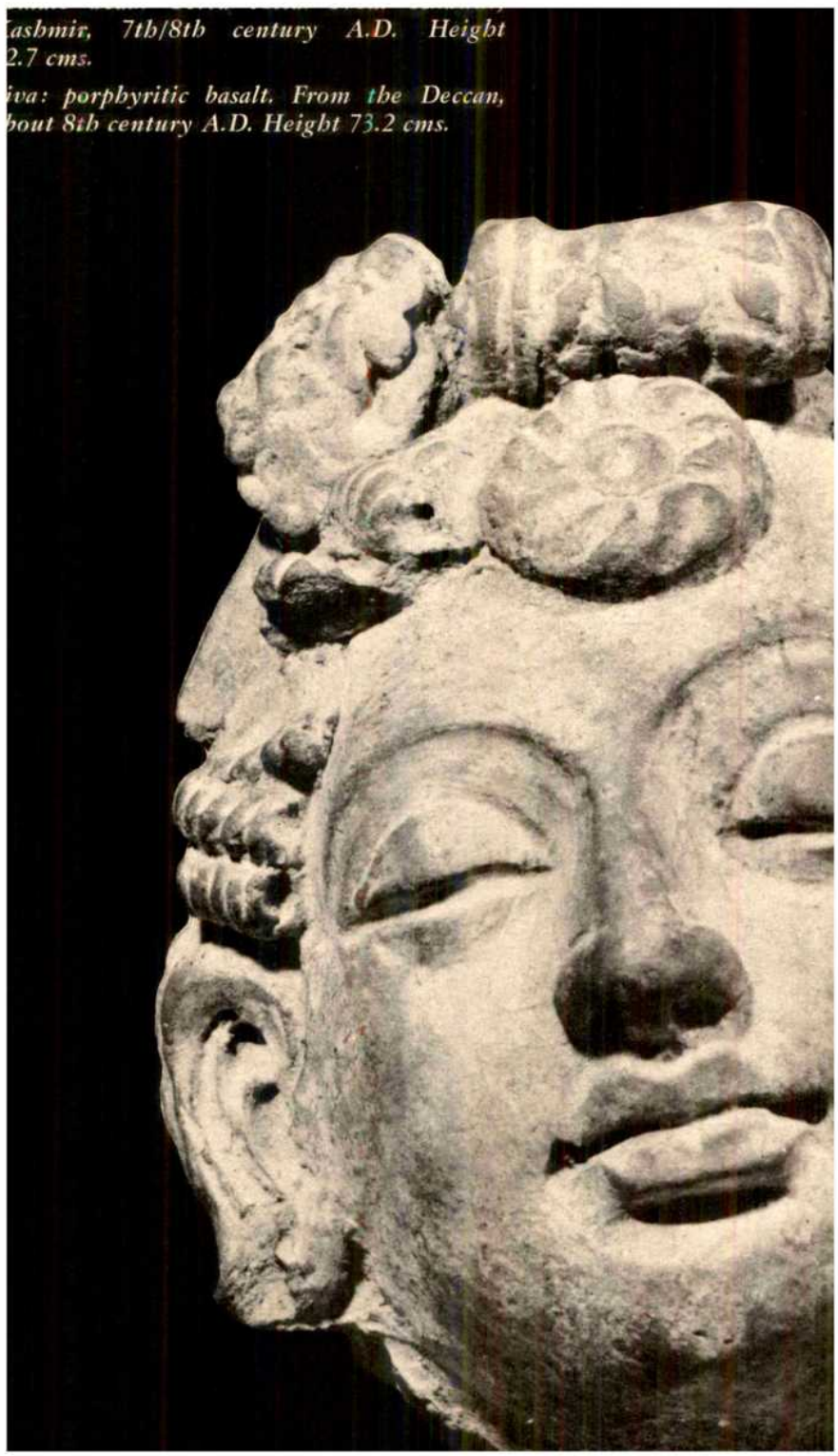
16 *Head of the Buddha. Red sandstone. From Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. Gupta dynasty, 5th century A.D. Height 24.75 cms.*

17 *Head of the Buddha. Lime composition. From Gandhara, N. W. India, about 5th century A.D. Height 28 cms. This beautifully poised head is a fine example of the Gandhara school. Although Hellenistic features are obvious, it nevertheless belongs more to Indian than to Western tradition. It shows the same delicate combination and balance of naturalistic and formal elements as the Kushan Yakshis at Fig. 6 . Notice, for instance, how the soft, sensuous treatment of the lips and nostrils rises into the lyrical, abstract lines of nose and brow. The sensuousness is also off-set by the stylised treatment of the hair, and the incisive edge given to the hairline.*

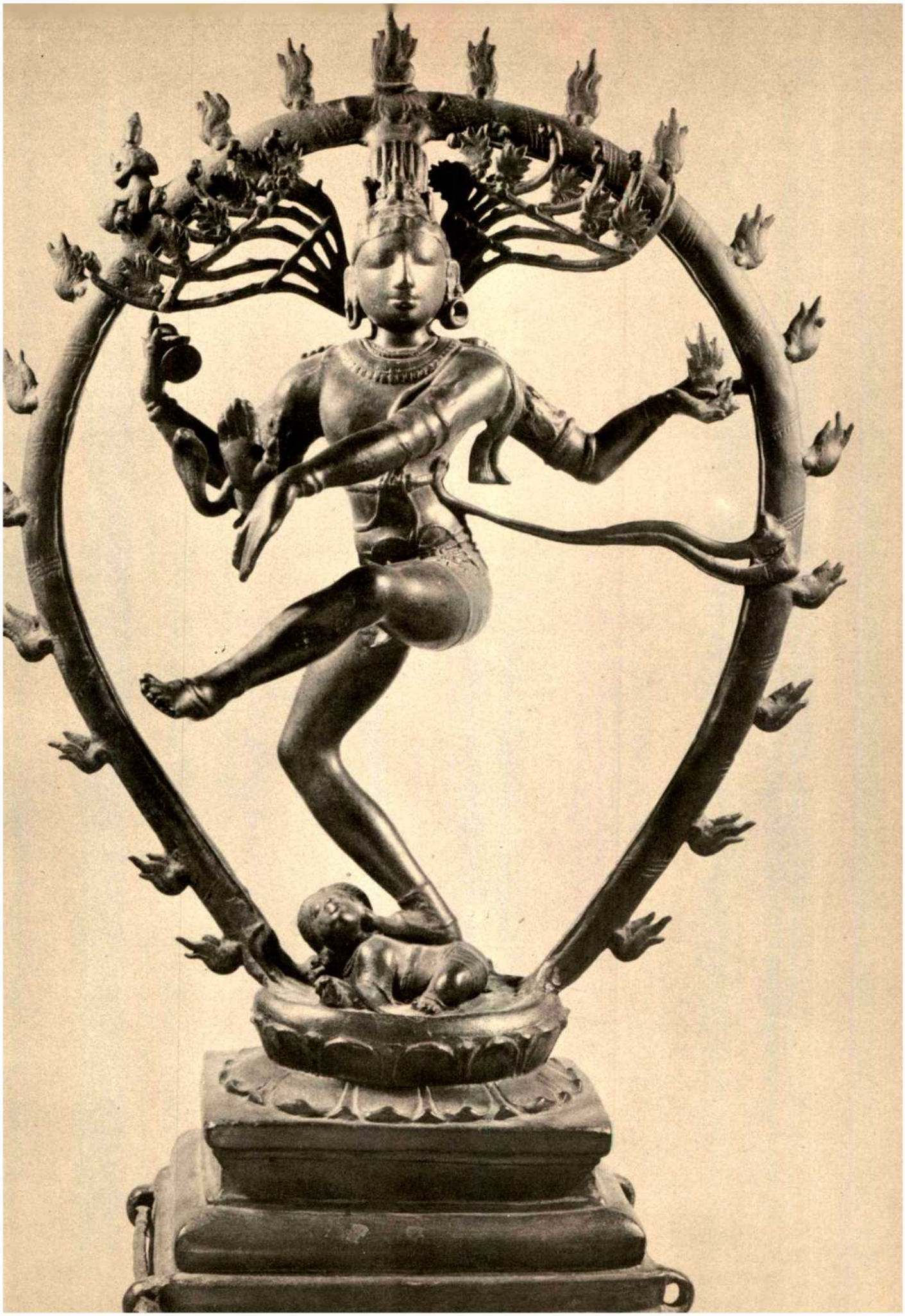


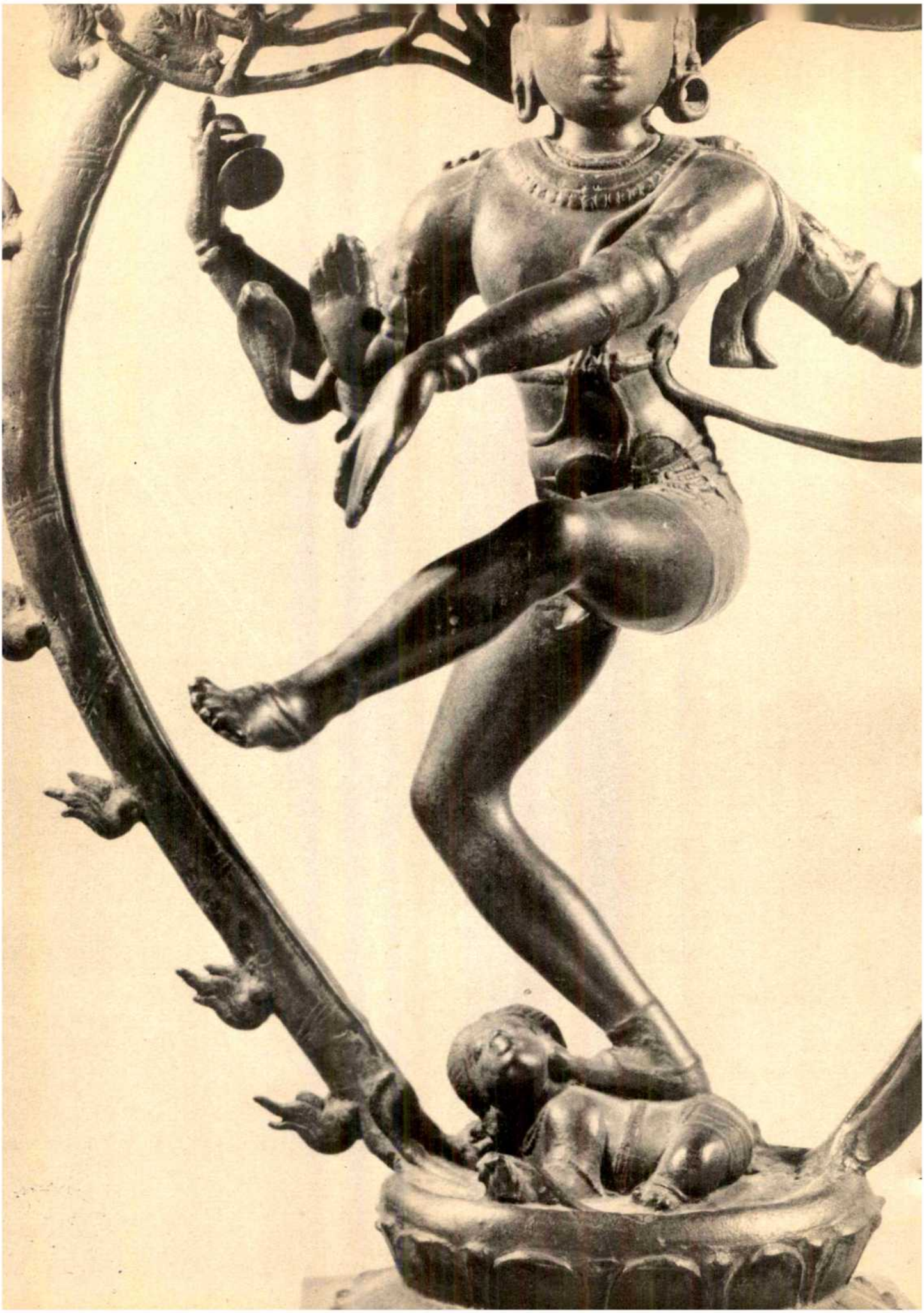
ashmir, 7th/8th century A.D. Height 2.7 cms.

iva: porphyritic basalt. From the Deccan, bout 8th century A.D. Height 73.2 cms.



20 Head of the Buddha. Mica-schist. From Sultanganj, Bihar State, 8th/9th century A.D. Height 21.5 cms.





21 & 22 *Siva Nataraja. Bronze. From Madras State. Chola dynasty, 10th c A.D. Height 89 cms.*

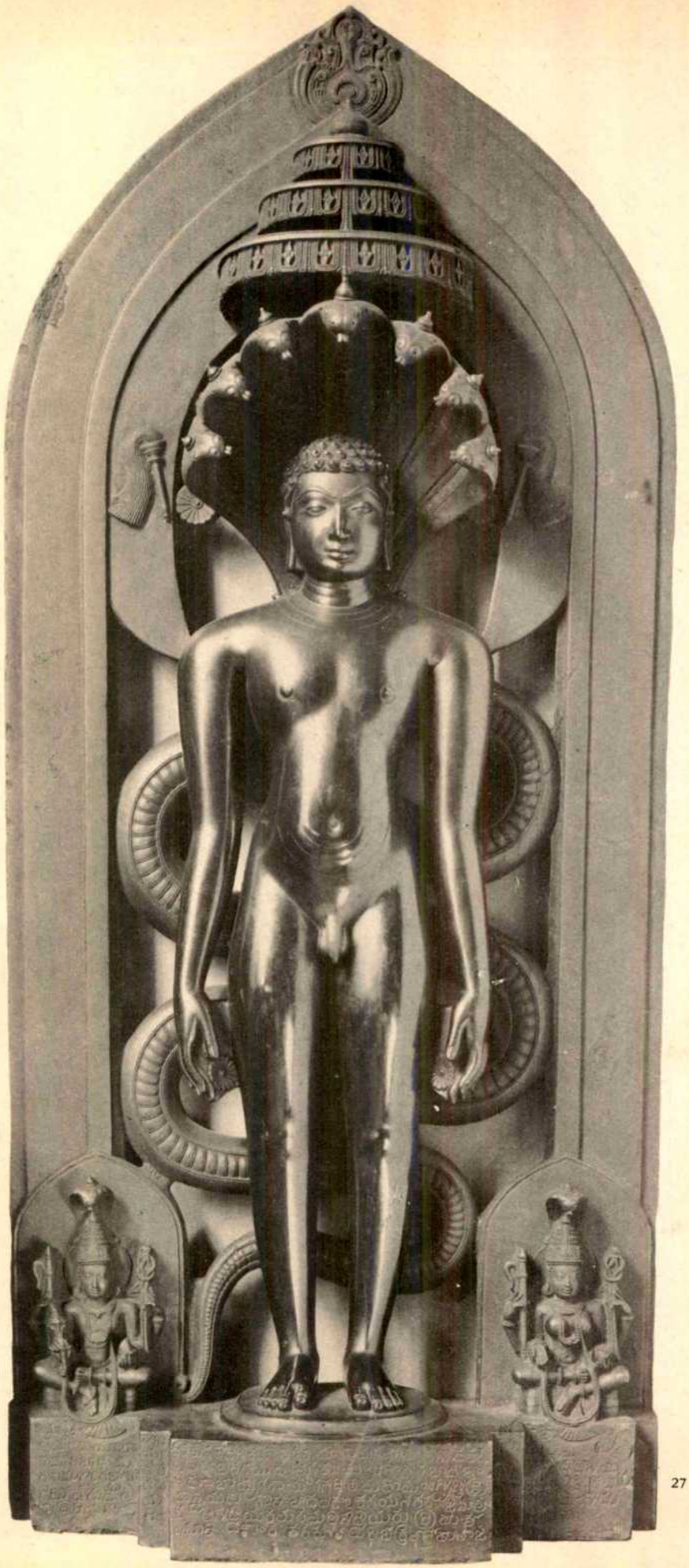
23 *The Mother Goddess Ambika. Stone, properly called 'altered ultra basic rock. From a Jain temple, Orissa, about 11th century A.D. Height 51.5 cms.*

24 *Dakshinamurti (Siva as the Great Teacher). Granite. From Madras State, probably Tanjore region. Chola dynasty, late 11th century A.D. Height 99 cms.*
Siva, disguised as an ascetic, is revealing the ultimate mysteries to an audience of rishis *or hermits in the wilderness.*

25 *Durga as Mahishasuramardini. Potstone. From Mysore State. Hoysala dynasty, early 13th century A.D. Height 143 cms.*

26 *King Narasimhadeva with his spiritual preceptor. Carboniferous shale. From Konarak, Orissa. Eastern Ganga dynasty, 13th century A.D. Height 78.1 cms.*

A.I.H. & ARCHAEOLOGY



27 *Parsvanatha, 23rd Jain Tirthankara. Shale. From Gulbarga, Mysore State. Height 155 cms.*

28 *Detail from a Buddhist palm-leaf ms. From North-eastern India. Pala dynasty, late 11th or early 12th century A.D.*
This represents the earliest surviving style of miniature painting, and it recalls the elegant naturalism so lavishly expressed on the walls of Ajanta cave-temples at an earlier period. It depicts the Buddhist feminine divinity Shyamatara, expounding wisdom to two goddesses. The illustration does not bear any relation to the text (in this case, the Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita*), but was there to imbue the document with the magical power of divine association.*

The Treatment of Space in Indian Painting

'Colour occupies space', says an old Indian text, thereby indicating that paintings in India were vibrations of kinetic rhythms, seeking alliance with energies in nature. From the ritual of sprinkling colour or powdered chalk on the doorstep, to the large sweeps of brush strokes on the walls of houses, the frescoes in holy caves and miniature paintings in palm leaf manuscripts, expressionism in pigments was part of tradition for self-realisation of our peoples, long before the mediaeval period.

The infiltrators who came in, generation after generation, accepted the festivals of the folk along with the gay processions.

And even when an incoming religion, like Islam, tabooed imitation of human forms, men like Akbar, the Great Mughal, got over the prohibition by interpreting the decree of the interpretors of the Prophet Muhammad, by his own interpretation that: as God is the Creator, human beings can also honour god through creative works.

Even before Akbar's father, Humayun, brought two Persian Painters, Mir Syed Ali and Khwaja Abu Sammad, with him, from his refuge with Shah Tehmasp in Tabriz, the Pathan sultans in India had already begun to integrate their consciousness with some of the practices of the indigenous peoples. Thus, in Gujarat in the early mediaeval period, in Malwa in the Central Peninsula, in Jaunpur, in eastern Uttar Pradesh, and in the Deccan (Golconda, Bijapur, Ahmednagar), the interaction of Jain, Hindu and Muslim brushwork with the Persian Kalam had already begun.

In the earliest Jain Paintings of western India the use of Persian lapiz lazuli blue and Chinese gold appears, with the ochre reds, yellows and browns of local paintings. And the sharp triangular lines of Central Asia begin to merge with the curves and lyrical harmonies of the native temperament.

The dominant attitude of imaginative transformation of nature is seen. Feelings, emotions and moods imbue the foreign derivations with depth, shown through density of colours, and the 'decorative isolation' of the Persian miniatures is absorbed as part of our tradition.

The process of synthesis of the Persian and Indian colours, lines and forms, can be more clearly seen in the development from the early eclectic large paintings on cloth of the *Hamza Namah* under Akbar, through the *Tuti Namah* miniatures, to the action pictures of the *Akbar Namah.*

Indian painting remains dominantly two-dimensional in its occupation of space, as it was generally based on memory and not a copy of nature.

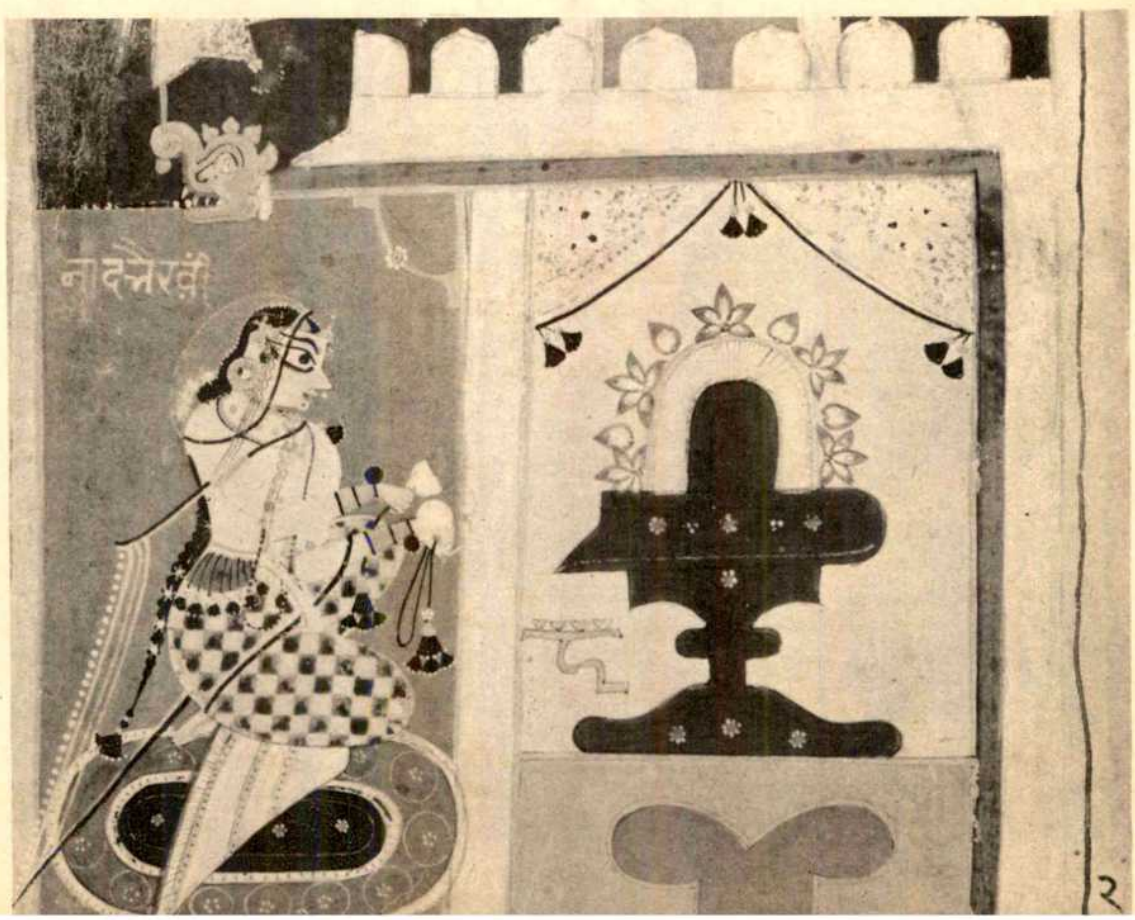
Some of the Mughal Painters began to incorporate the three-dimensional perspective of the West, as also to reproduce shadows, in their miniatures. The profile in the portraits sometimes became the three-fourths face. These interactions produced some bizarre results, until foreign influences were absorbed.

As the Indo-Persian Mughal style was mainly secular, the religious traditions of the feudal states in Rajasthan and in the Punjab Himalayas, as well as in the Deccan, adopted kingly patronage from the Imperial capital. And a large number of poetical romances, mythological books and portraits, were rendered up in various parts of the country, with added local flavours, colour insinuations and linear rhythms, derived from the folk base under the spell of Imperial sophistication.

Almost every generation saw new beginnings in the art of painting, within the basic traditional framework of the two-dimensional picture, until the preference for three-dimensional forms, mainly under British in-comers, with its emphasis on the realistic representation in landscape and portraiture, submerged the interior native viewpoints.

Only the self-conscious synthesis between the substance of reality as seen in the west, with the imaginative bias of the contemporaries, against the vague, revivalist soft colourwashes of the "modern" movement in Bengal, has brought fresh experiments in Painting.

The introvert emphasis of the Indian mind still colours the world through subjectivisms, which often lead to abstraction beyond abstraction on the one hand and the search for human form on the other.



Detail—Lady worshipping at a shrine to Siva, Mandu, Central India, c. 1550.

Paintings of the Hamza Namah

Story of Amir Hamza

The largest and the most extraordinary of all Mughal manuscripts is the *Hamza Namah* or the *Dastan-i-Amir Hamza.* It is a pictorial document describing the semi-apocryphal adventures of Amir Hamza an uncle of the Prophet Muhammad. Like so many heroes, Hamza passed into the world of legend after his death and became the central figure of a fabled romance spun around fantastic adventures.

Of Persian origin, this story caught the Indian imagination and enjoyed considerable popularity in the Sultanate kingdoms of Pre-Mughal India. Often it was the subject of illustrated manuscripts. But, in scale and conception none of these can even remotely approach the *Hamza Namah* series executed for Akbar, the third Mughal Emperor.

***Emperor Akbar's* Hamza Namah**

It is said that the tale of the *Hamza Namah* was such a favourite with Akbar that its illustration was taken up on an unprecedented scale; it was to consist of fourteen hundred paintings in twelve unsewn volumes. This vast undertaking took fifteen years to complete.

Of this great series, today, scarcely one tenth survives. Most of the existing folios are preserved in the Industrial Museum at Vienna and in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London: a few folios are scattered in various other museums and private collections all over the world.

Unusually large in size

The *Hamza Namah* paintings are of an unusually large size, measuring approximately two and a half feet by two feet. They are painted on cotton and the text is written on the reverse side. In all probability the paintings were held up for view while the text was being read aloud. In this aspect the *Hamza Namah* paintings can be compared to illustrated legends—a form of entertainment still prevalent in the Indian village fairs where the recitation of the story is supplemented by appropriate visuals.

This *magnum opus,* according to contemporary accounts, was executed in the Imperial atelier by fifty or more artists from various parts of India working under the direct supervision of the two famous Persian masters—Mir Sayyid Ali and Abdus Samad—who had accompanied Akbar's father Humayun, to India.

Although there is hardly any painting that can be ascribed to Humayun's reign with certainty, the credit for creating conditions conducive for Mughal Painting undoubtedly goes to Humayun.

Humayun invites Persian artists

Defeated and driven out of India, Humayun had sought refuge in the sympathetic court of the Persian ruler Shah Tahmasp Safavi. During his stay there, he was introduced to the greatest artistic and cultural tradition of Persia, for, it was for the delectation of Shah Tehmasp that some of the finest and the most lavish manuscripts were being painted. About this time, however, Shah Tehmasp's enthusiasm for the arts was on the wane, and Humayun, who greatly admired the magnificent achievements of the Shah's artists, could, without offending his gracious royal host, invite one of the Shah's artists to join his entourage. Later, perhaps, more artists came to India when this deposed Indian king returned and victoriously recaptured his lost dominions.

Humayun was once again the ruler of north India, but, before he could begin to enjoy the fruits of his triumph so arduously achieved, he died. He was succeeded by his son, Akbar, who was only fourteen years old at that time, and Humayun's Persian artists formed a part of his inheritance.

Akbar's Atelier

Akbar's energy and interest knew no bounds. While he was enlarging and consolidating his kingdom, he was also patronising the arts. A studio of painting was set up consisting of Persian painters, and Indian artists probably acquired as human loot during his various conquests.

One of the early projects taken up by Akbar's atelier was the *Hamza Namah.* "Its Dionysiac turbulence, broad handling and strident colour" are startlingly different from anything that had ever been painted before, either in Persia or in India. The Persian works, by contrast, are ceremonial, refined and characterised by subtle colour harmonies. The dynamic movement in the *Hamza Namah,* as also the naturalistic rendering, have nothing in common with the stylised expression of the indigenous Indian idioms.

A New Style

From where did this painting, with its slashing style and bold colouring originate? How did all the disparate elements converge towards and fuse into one cohesive style? And, in such an incredibly short space of time? There can be little doubt that the coalescence occurred in the Imperial atelier and the unifying force was the Emperor's own imposing personality combined with his intense interest in painting.

A synthesis of different stylistic elements

It is possible to observe the formation and crystallisation of the Akbari style in the manuscript of the *Tuti Namah* or the Tales of a Parrot, executed sometime in the 1560's. Many of its paintings can be distinctly related to one or the other of the styles practiced in India before the coming of the Mughals. These illustrations reveal themselves as the work of recruits who were yet to shed their former ways. As the book progresses a more integrated style emerges. Interestingly enough, it is extremely close to that of the *Hamza Namah* folios. Clearly, the latter part of the *Tuti Namah* manuscript immediately preceded the execution of the *Hamza Namah* or was coeval with it.

In some of the extant folios of the *Hamza Namah* too, the various stylistic elements remain recognisable and as yet not fully assimilated. The early pages are still within the Persian Safavi school, the compositions delighting in symmetry and restraint; only the warmer tones in the colouring seem inconsistent. A certain coarseness can be detected in the drawing, and this could very well be due to the largeness of scale of these pictures as also the fact that they are done on cloth. In the later paintings, the roughness is counteracted by a less harsh outline, exquisite colouring of tiled surfaces in architecture and rich textures.

Dramatic

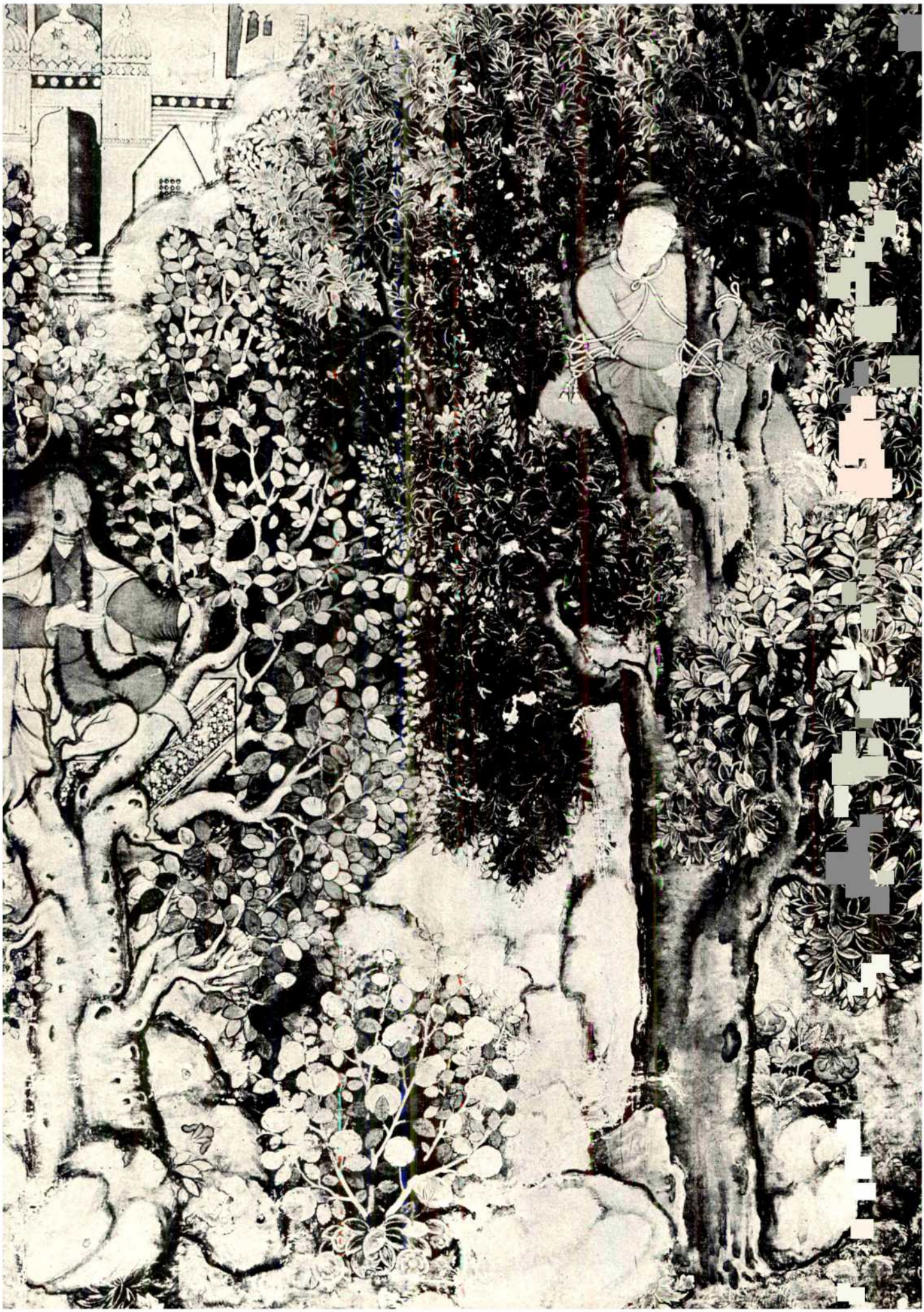
The most striking feature of the *Hamza Namah* folios is its dramatic action, often of such violence that it appears to burst through the picture-frame. This impression is intensified further by the nearness of the figures to the picture-plane. A giant, one of the characters in the story, looms large in some paintings; in others, bloodthirsty warriors chop away at their opponents amidst decapitated bodies, gushing blood and gaping wounds, and severed heads.

Sensitive reflection of Akbar's personality

In these pages the artists have reflected ever so sensitively, the moods, the thoughts, the preoccupations and aspirations of their Imperial patron. They provide a key to his emotional states. In the explosive rhythm, and even more so in the coloristic violence of these paintings, is found the "formal expression of the struggle of Akbar's powerful intellect against the manifold problems of an empire in the making." The *Hamza Namah* symbolises the excitement and the ambitious fervour of Akbar's early years as Emperor.

30 Gardeners beating the giant Zamurrad who is trapped in a well. Illustration to the **Hamza Namah.**
Mughal, c. 1570.
In this painting, Zamurrad Shah the fire-worshipping Persian giant of vacillating loyalties, is depicted as an ungainly figure of fun, belaboured by gardeners as he strives to escape from a well.

31 The Magician Ankarat in the guise of a man, tempting the bound Erij. Illustration to the **Hamza Namah.**
Mughal, c. 1570.



Paintings of the Akbar Namah

Story of Akbar's reign

His Imperial Majesty Jalal al-Din Akbar, the third Mughal Emperor of India, ordered Abul Fazl to "write with the pen of sincerity the account of the glorious events of our dominion-increasing victories."

In three volumes

Abul Fazl's *Akbar Namah* or the History of Akbar's reign is surely the most complete record that has ever been compiled on the affairs of any one court. It comprises of three volumes: volume one consists of two parts – the first deals with the birth and horoscope of Akbar, the genealogy of his ancestors of the House of Timur and the history of the first two Mughal kings, Babar and Humayun; while the second contains the story of Akbar's reign from his accession to the end of the seventeenth year. Volume two of the *Akbar Namah* is a continuation of events from the beginning of the eighteenth year of Akbar's rule till the forty-sixth year, where it stops due to the treacherous murder of the biographer brought about by Prince Salim, the future Emperor Jahangir. The third volume, is, in fact, an independant work entitled *Ain-i-Akbari* which enumerates in meticulous detail the working of Akbar's Empire.

A de luxe copy for the Imperial Library

In the year A.D. 1596 Abul Fazl presented the completed first volume of the *Akbar Namah* for Akbar's inspection. Formal orders were issued to have a *de luxe* edition of this volume prepared for the Imperial Collection of books and manuscripts. Accordingly, the project was entrusted to the finest calligraphers and painters of the realm, and when completed, the illustrated copy of the *Akbar Namah* was placed in Emperor Akbar's library.

A much treasured document, it remained in the Imperial Collections to be taken out only by Imperial command and for the perusal and delectation of the Mughal monarchs.

Lost during Nadir Shah's invasion

In 1739, Nadir Shah, tempted by the accumulated treasure of the Mughals, swooped down with his soldiers on the dust-laden plains of Delhi. In the senseless killing and looting that followed this raid, countless valuable manuscripts, including the *Akbar Namah,* were dislodged from the Imperial Library and either destroyed or scattered far and wide.

A fragment preserved in the Victoria & Albert Museum

Much of the *Akbar Namah* got lost, but miraculously, a fragment survived the various vicissitudes that befell it, and finally found its way to the distant shores of another land. And, there it now rests, occupying an honoured place in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

That this fragment is, indeed, a part of the copy commissioned by Akbar is borne out by the various seals and endorsements that mark the first and last folios of the manuscript. Amongst these, there is one of Jehangir's who has written in his own hand that it was deposited in his library in the year of his ascension. Other endorsements made during the reign of Aurangzeb reveal, that, during his reign, he had the manuscript taken out on various occasions for purposes of study. The last decipherable Imperial endorsement belongs to the Aurangzeb period and is dated A.D. 1688.

Wandered from hand to hand

Apparently this manuscript wandered from hand to hand after it had left the Imperial Library, for, in A.D. 1793, as attested by a seal impressed upon the fly-leaf, it came into the possession of Ahmad Ali Khan Bahadur. The inscription on the seal states:

"This book belongs to Ahmad Ali Khan Bahadur,
If someone else claims its ownership, he is a liar."

Clearly, he was a man of means for an entry made by him on the book records that Rs. 7000/- was the price paid for it. It certainly was a substantial sum to pay for a book in those days and indicates that the article was considered rather valuable. Its appeal then, as now, must have been tremendous.

Ahmad Ali Khan, unfortunately, does not give any information as to where or from whom he obtained the manuscript. Also, we do not know precisely whether or not this fragment was already detached from the rest of the volume when he purchased it.

For another century the whereabouts of this manuscript remain unknown. In A.D. 1869 it surfaces again when the widow of Major-General Clark offered it for sale to the Victoria and Albert Museum. As Commissioner of Oudh, Major-General Clark had spent some time in India and, presumably, acquired the manuscript during his stay there—either through purchase or in the form of a gift.

Elegant script and exciting illustrations

From the surviving folios of this manuscript it is evident that the volume was written in elegent *nastaliq* script on fine paper, light brown in tone. The text is often arranged in geometrical designs. The present fragment consists of 217 folios and is interspersed by 117 full-paged miniatures. A few of these paintings are spread over two pages facing one another. The beginning folio has the traditional floral-geometric pattern in red azure, blue and gold.

Many of these illustrations do not have any text and wherever there is some, it consists of merely one or two lines written in panels situated at the top or the bottom of the painting. The text does not intrude upon the composition in any way. Although the manuscript follows the Persian upright book format, it is gradually moving away from the Persian practice of the text being an integral part of an illustrated folio.

Illustrates events from A.D. 1560-1577

The manuscript spans seventeen years of Akbar's reign—from the fourth to the twenty-first regnal year, that is, from A.D. 1560 to A.D. 1577. It features all the important events that occurred in those years, many of which are illustrated.

Characterised by immediacy

What is most striking about these paintings is the immediacy of their pictorial content. They are like journalistic recordings of day-to-day events that were taking place in Akbar's reign. The portrayal of these scenes required much ingenuity on the part of the artist. He had to constantly improvise and seek new solutions in painting, for, the formulae that had come down to him through the ages became meaningless in the context of the *Akbar Namah*.

And, the remarkable inventiveness of the artists becomes evident in the compositions where the elements are arranged along a steep diagonal line or a meandering S curve that leads the eye from the bottom to the top of the painting. Sometimes, the figures are grouped around a central accent in four quadrants. Occasionally the action, enlivened with realistic detail, would be laid in the foreground while in the far distance a toylike city, appropriately blued and diminished in size, would be indistinctly visible in a smiling spacious landscape.

Executed by outstanding artists in the Imperial atelier

This manuscript, like the other historical manuscripts prepared in Akbar's reign has been painted in the typical workshop manner practised in the Imperial atelier. Thus, more than one artist would be engaged on one painting—one would do the outline, another the background, and, a third the portraits. The intention was purely eclectic—to channelise the talent of each artist towards obtaining the best results. The studio supervisor noted the names of the artists in the margin of the painting for Akbar to examine and reward in the course of his weekly inspections. From the names of the artists on the paintings of the *Akbar Namah* it is evident that, in all, fifty-six artists worked on it. Among them Basawan, Miskina, Lal and Kesu Kalan seem to be most prominent, and not unexpectedly, these names are among the ones listed by Abul Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari* as being outstanding artists of that time.

Significant

Despite the workshop technique, the compositions do not appear to be contrived. They are unified and controlled, their style integrated and their colouring vivid as well as varied. But even more than the accomplished workmanship the viewer is struck by the excitement in the painting, the unparalleled feeling of observing action "directly reported"—a quality that makes the *Akbar Namah* paintings truly significant works of art.

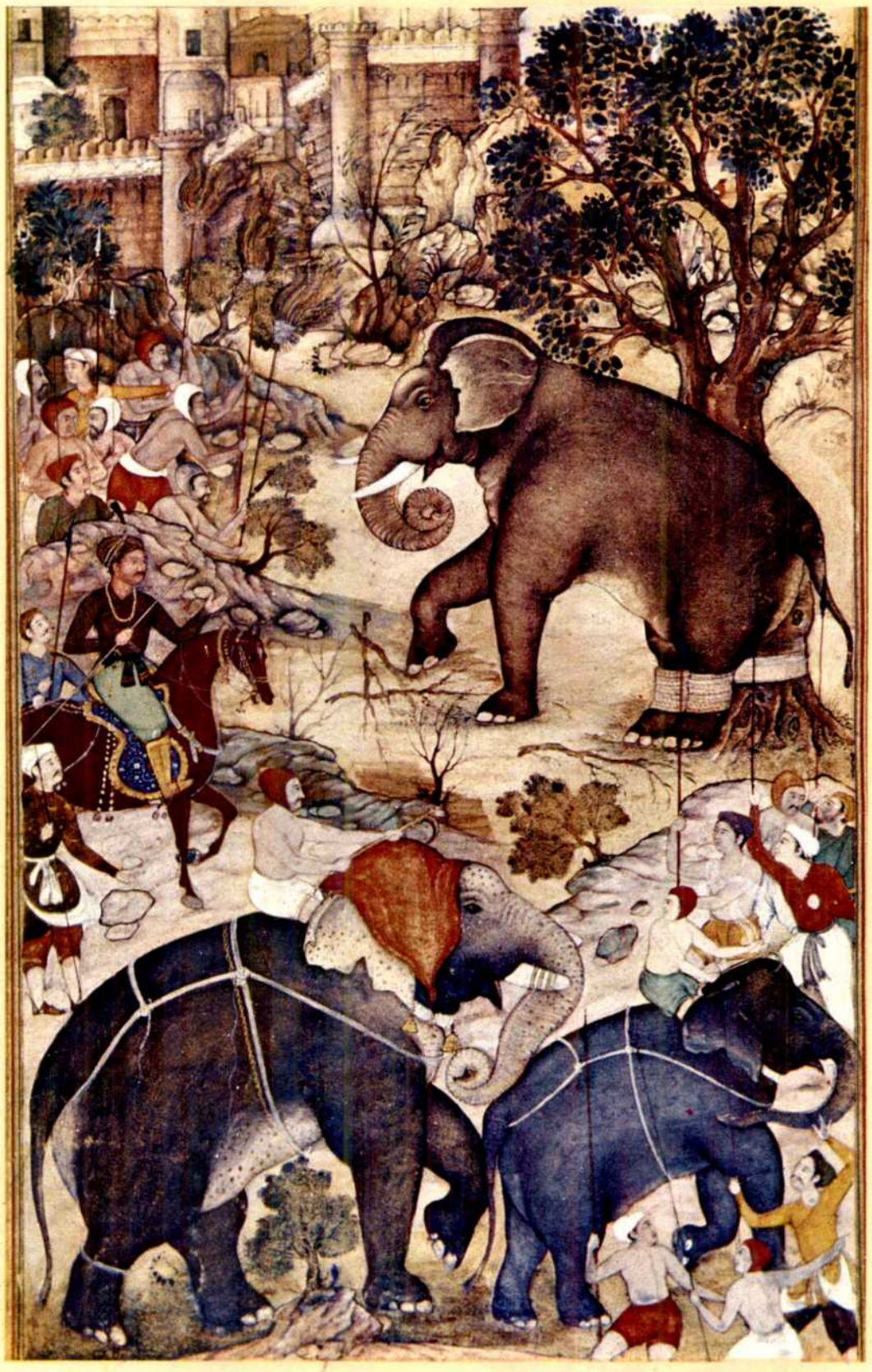
باز بهادر بدست آورده بود از صامت و ناطق تا تمام حرمها و پاتران و لولیان بنظر اشرف گذرانیدند
و آنحضرت بموجب مرحمت عامه قبول نموده بعضی را باو عنایت فرمودند و چهار روز در سارنگپور توقف
فرموده روز خرداد ششم خرداد ماه الهی موافق شنبه دویم رمضان

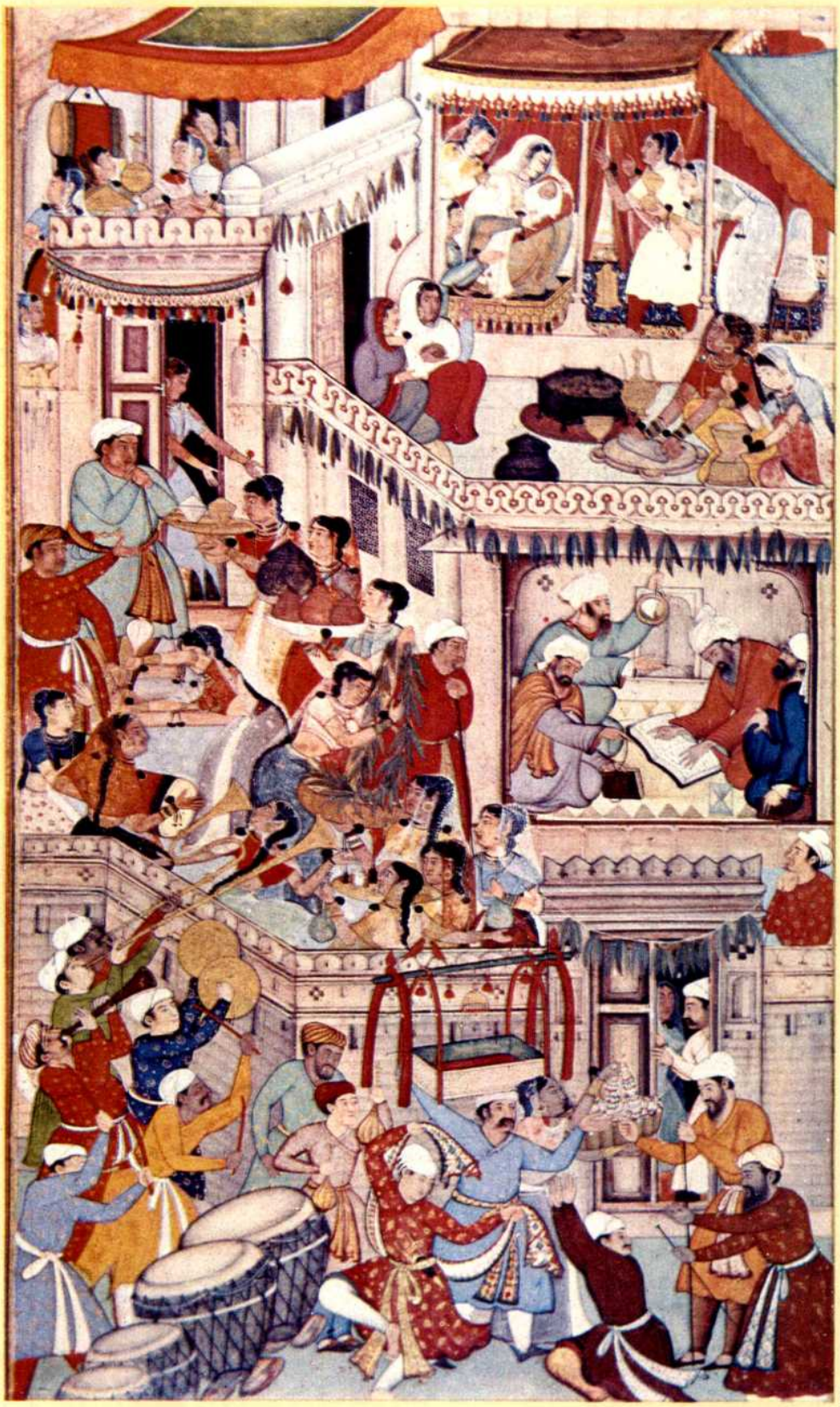
طرح پیشگیناعمل پرپس

32 ***Akbar watching dancing girls,***
Akbar Namah, ***c. 1590s.***
The delicate colouring and exquisitely tiled surfaces reveal the Persian antecedants in Mughal Art. At the same time, the artist delights in his newly acquired mastery of showing depth and space by means of diagonals and suggestive shading — a technique learnt from European sources.

33 ***Siege of Ranthambhor,***
Akbar Namah, ***c. 1590s.***
The heaving bullocks, the taut ropes and the flailing arms of soldiers graphically convey the effort with which the cannons are being hauled up the steep incline of the hill.
The composition, in opposing diagonals, is imbued with tension.

34 ***Akbar hunting in a fenced ring,***
Akbar Namah, ***c. 1590s.***
One of the favourite modes of hunting among the Mughals was the qamargah *or the enclosure. A large army of beaters would generally form a huge circle (often 50-60 miles in diameter) and by gradually decreasing the circumference drive the game into the centre. Days later, when the circle of beaters had become quite small (4-6 miles in diameter) a fence would be put up in place of the human chain.*
The Emperor would be the first one to ride in and hunt — sometimes for four or five days — using at various times a bow and arrow, a sword, a lance, a musket and even a lasso. After the Emperor had hunted, the nobles were allowed to take their turn, thereafter the servants of the court and finally the troopers and soldiers. Every day the enclosure was tightened further.
It is said that on one such occasion the sight of slaughtered and frightened animals so revulsed Akbar that he ordered them to be freed immediately.





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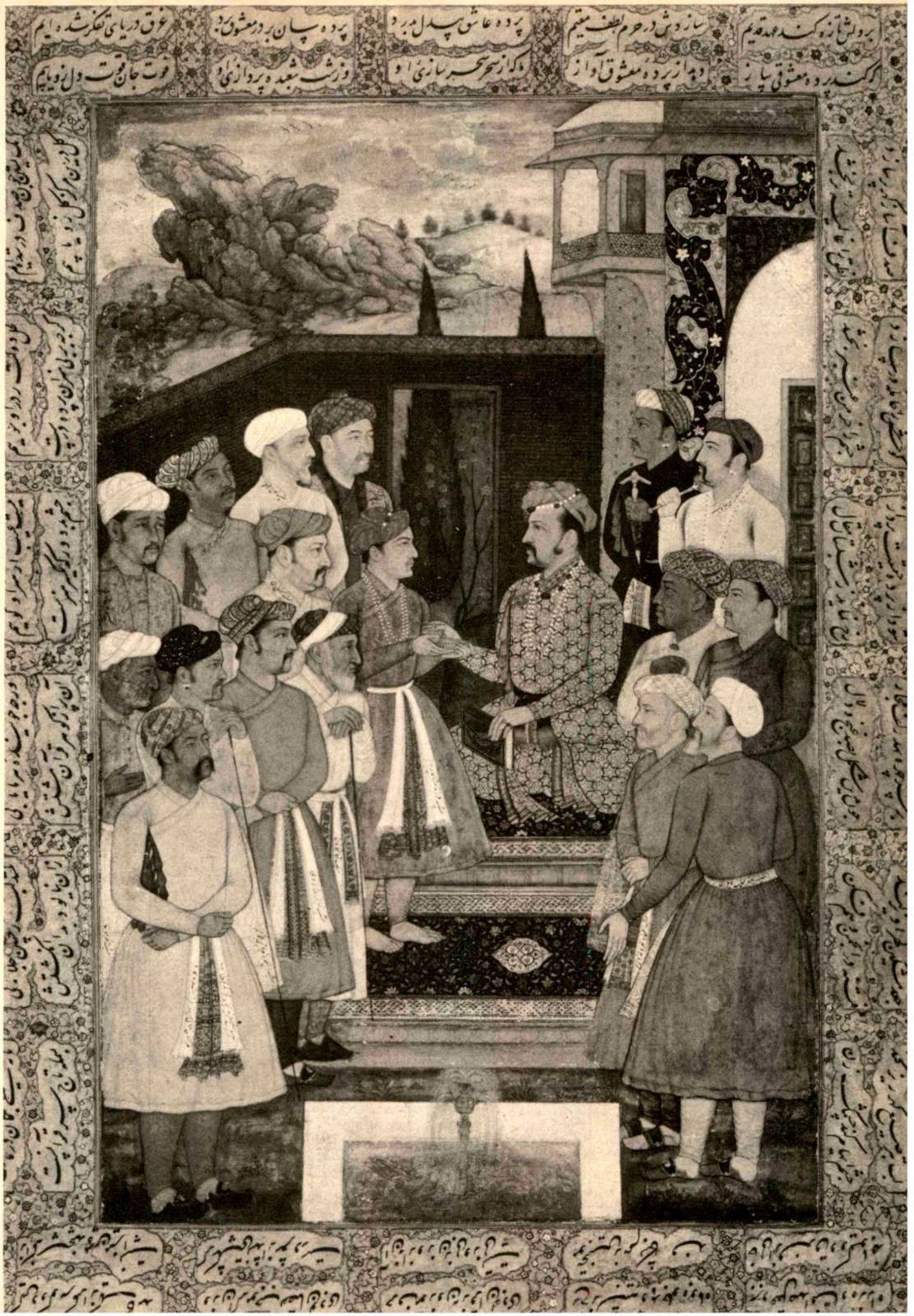
35 ***Akbar lost while hunting,***
Akbar Namah, *c. 1590s.*
In the excitement of the chase Akbar became separated from his companions and lost his way. After several hours the hunting party chanced to find him, seated under a large tree in utter exhaustion and frustration. The artist has composed the painting in four quadrants around the central accent of the tree sheltering Akbar.

36 ***Akbar inspecting a large elephant,***
Akbar Namah, *c. 1590s.*
Akbar accompanied by his retinue inspects a large elephant tied securely to a tree. The painting is composed in three horizontal segments with the main action in the middle section. In the foreground are two elephants, while in the background is a fort. The tan and brown spectrum of colours lends a sober tone to the colour scheme.

37 ***Rejoicings at the birth of Akbar's son Murad,***
Akbar Namah, *c. 1590s.*
A palace scene, the ascending diagonals, strong outlines and dancing rhythms of which give a penetrating insight into the simultaneity of all that is happening— the complex rituals in the birth chamber, the frantic excitement of the gesticulating women, the divines concentratedly casting the infant's horoscope, and, the joyous eclat *with which the drummers and dancers proclaim the birth of a prince.*



38 *The Emperor. Jahangir receiving Prince Parviz. Gouache on paper. Mughal school. (Jahangir period), c. 1614.*

39 *Attendant leading a black buck. Mughal, c. 1615.*

40 *Portrait of the Emperor Shah Jahan. Gouache on paper. Artist: Bichitr, Mughal school (Shah Jahan period), c. 1631.*

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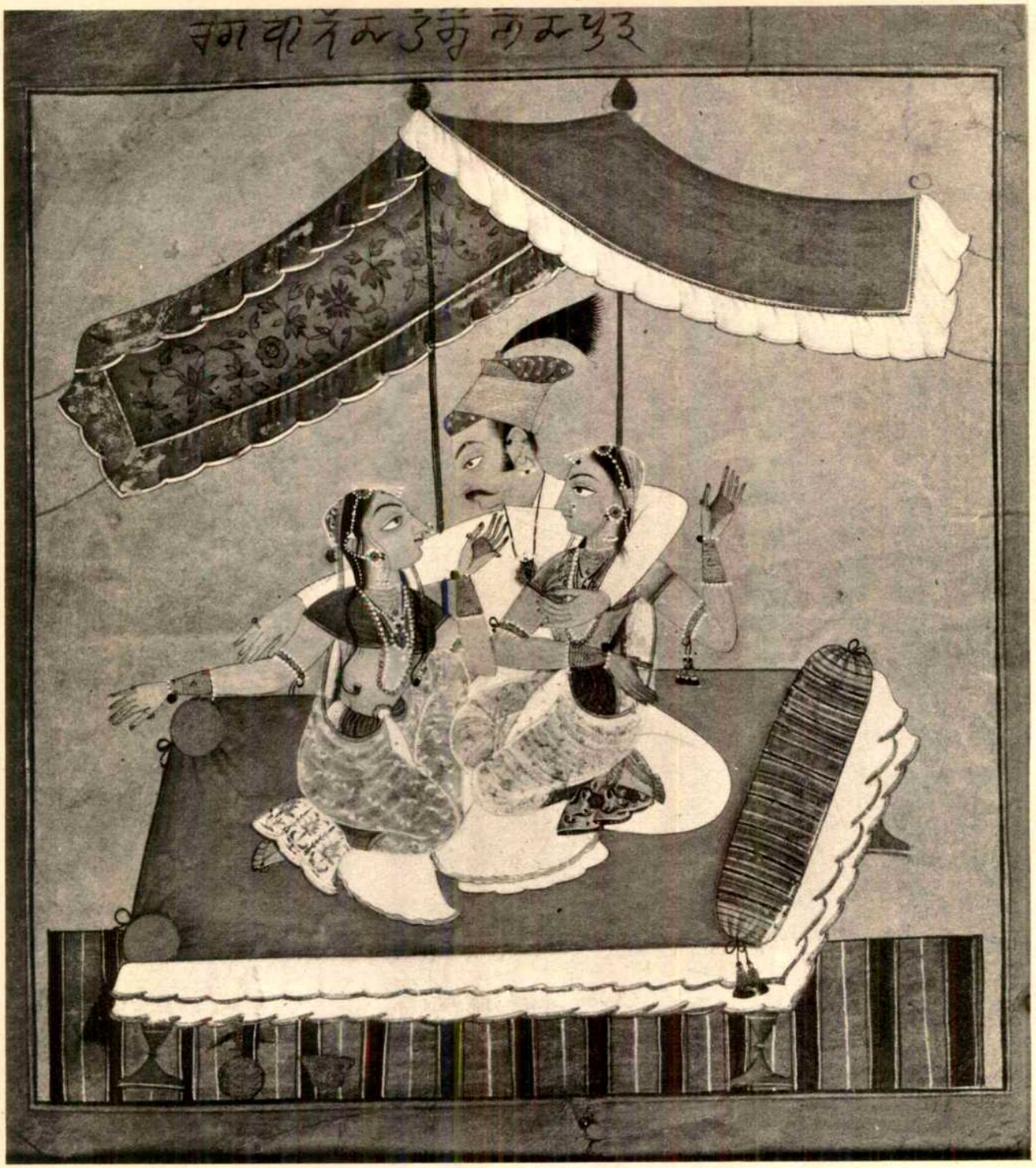
شبیہ خوب جہل سالگی منت عمل پذیر



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41 *Prince embracing two girls. Basholi school, c. 1730.*

42 *Lady with a hawk. Guler school, c. 1765.*

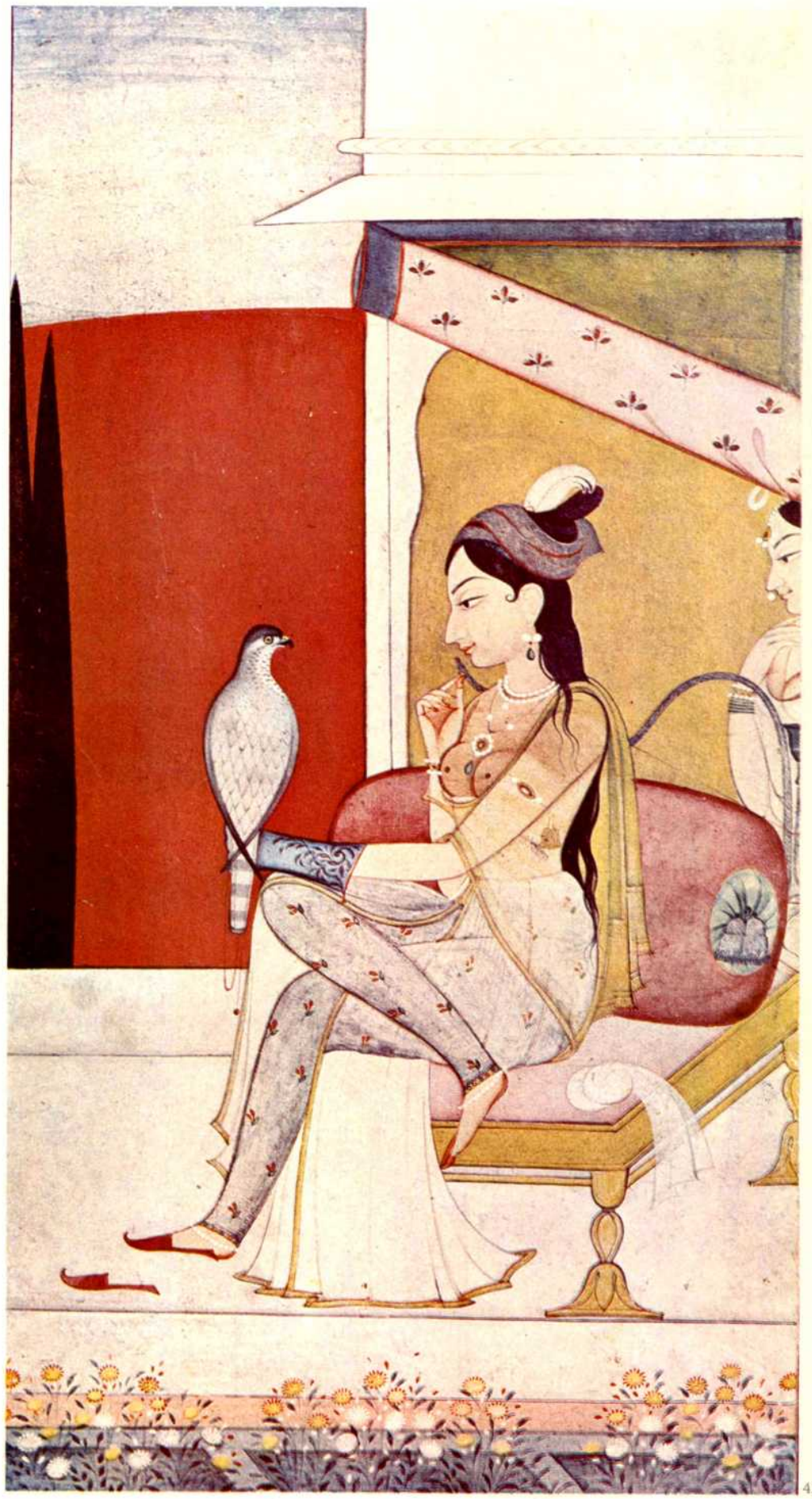
43 *Awaiting the Lover* (Utka Nayika). *Gouache on paper. Pahari school. From the Punjab Hills, North India, c. 1800.*

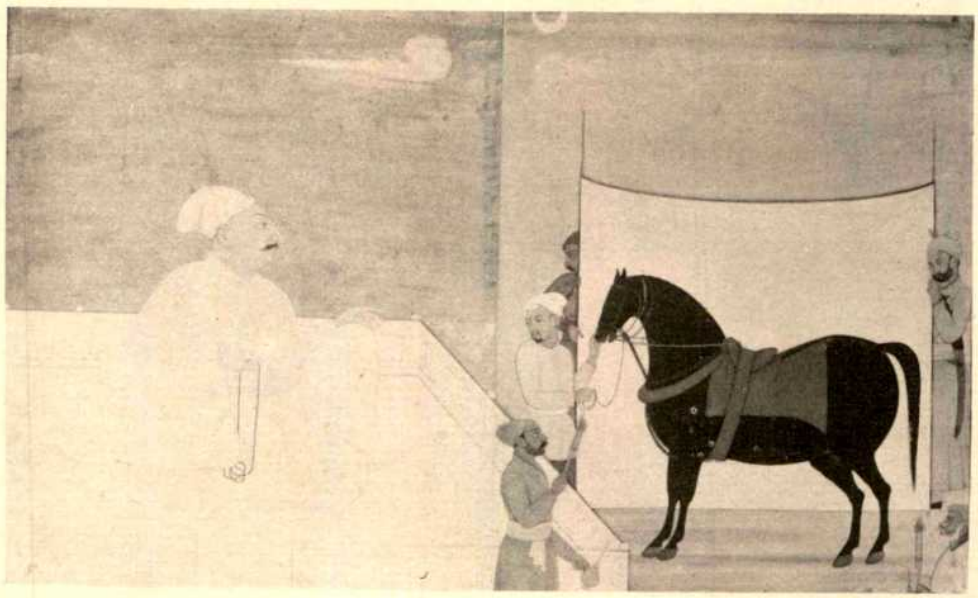
44 *Raja examining a horse by torch-light. Painted in two sections by different hands. Gouache on paper. Pahari school. From Jammu, c. 1760.*

45 *A Rajput prince shooting tiger. Kotah school (Rajasthan), c. 1780.*

46 *Maharana Jawan Singh of Mewar. Gouache on paper. Rajasthan School. From Udaipur, dated 1835.*

47 *Mahārājā Gulāb Singh of Jammu and Kashmir (1792-1857). Gouache on paper. Sikh school of painting. From Lahore, c. 1846.*





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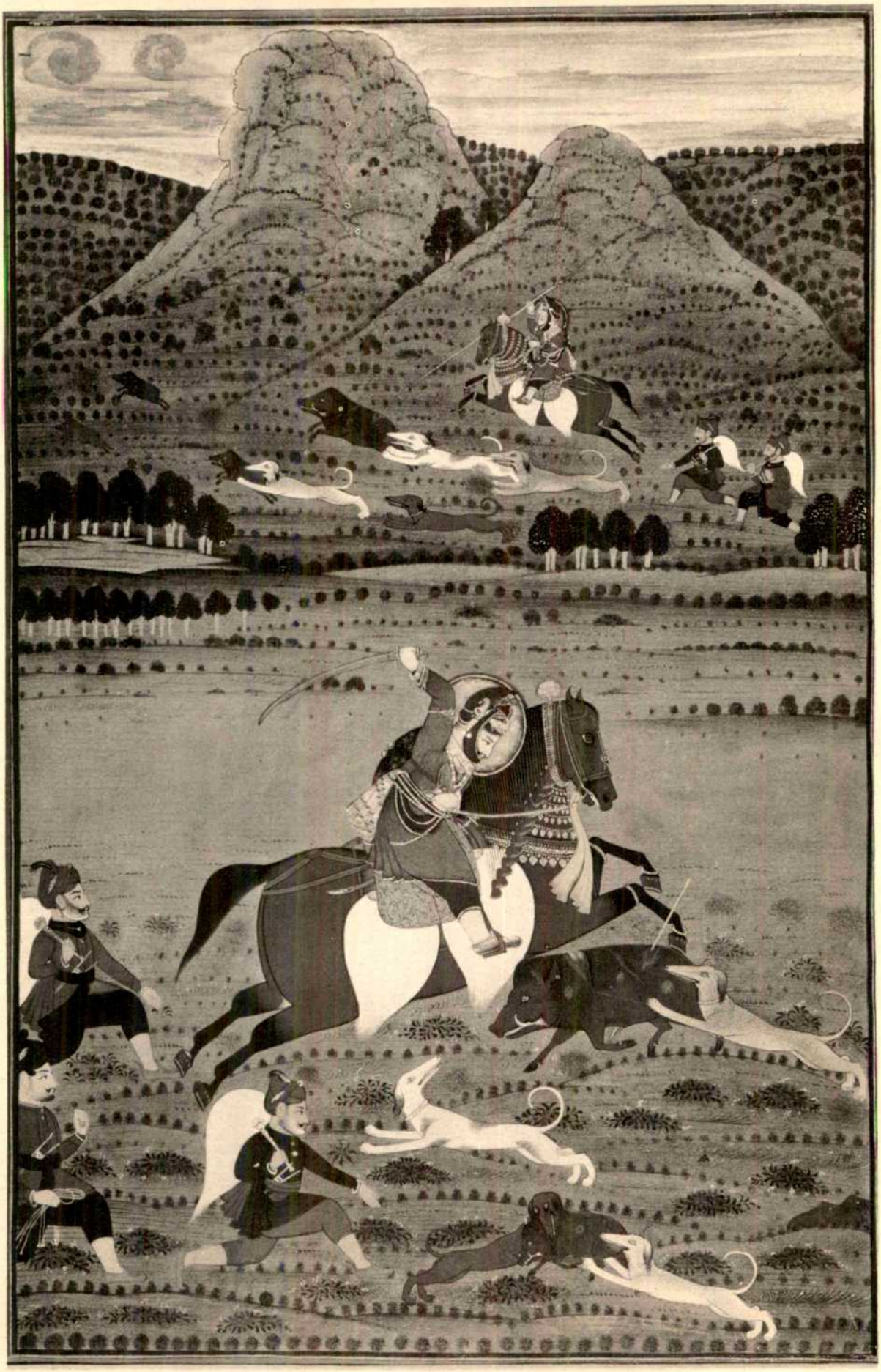

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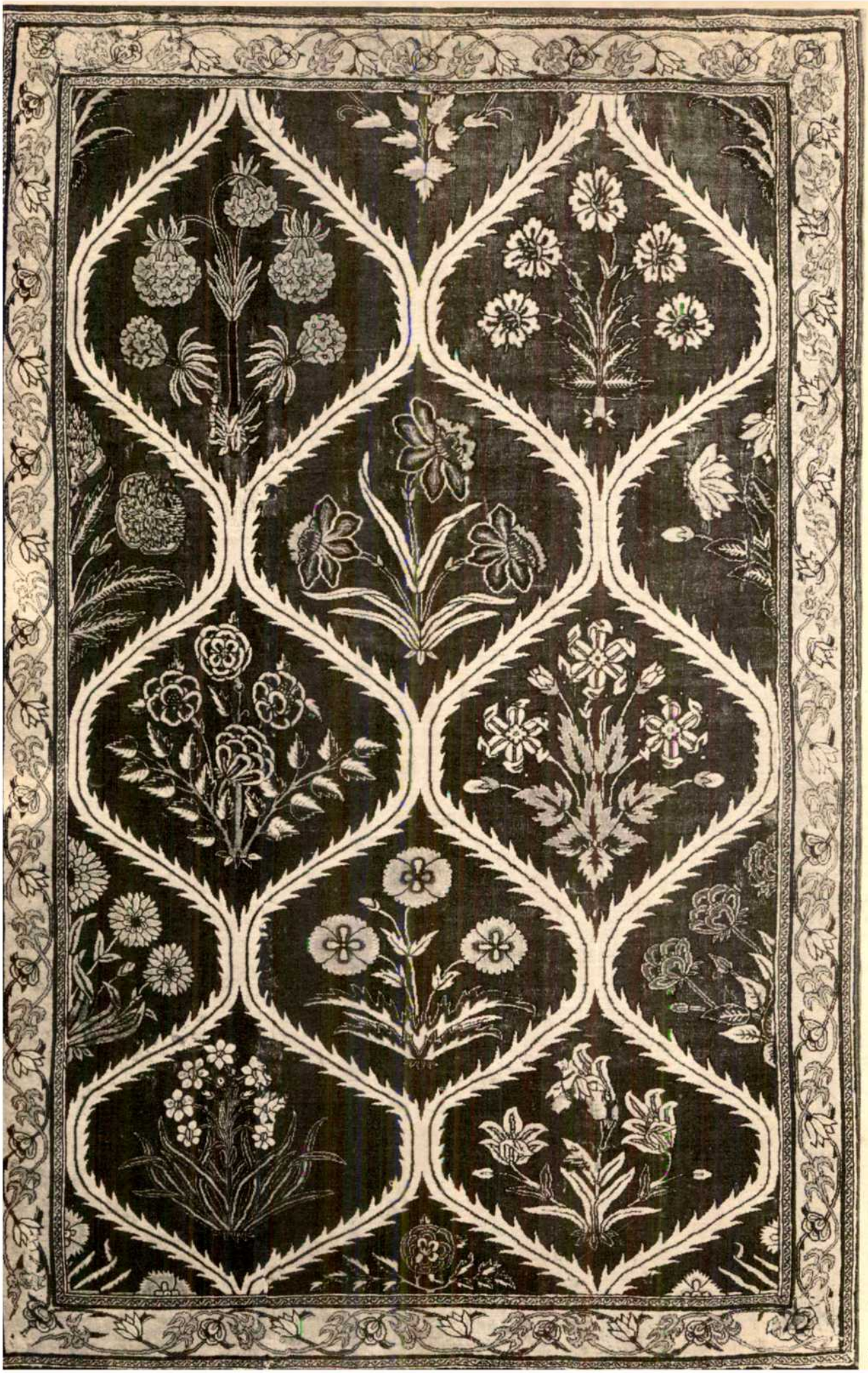


Indian Textiles in Historical Perspective

In India, the decorative arts reflect something fundamental in the traditional way of life: certainly more than the mere wish to be gay and sociable. No one who has been among the colorful crowd in Indian villages and market towns can ignore this impression. Costume and jewelry are not the only clues. It is expressed in the way even the poorest farmer will find a fitting moment to ornament his bullock's horns with silk tassels, and in the ubiquity of the flower-garland as a symbol of dedication. India is perhaps the only country in the modern world to support a large profession of garland-makers.

The spontaneity and instinctive good taste which characterize the old way of life cannot, of course, be considered apart from the tradition of handicraft on which it is based. Accustomed as we are to a sentimental view of handicraft as a reaction from mechanization, we must remember that in India this tradition survives —however precariously—in its own right. We are too late to stem the tide of mechanization; but we still have time to develop a better understanding of the way of life the handicraft represents.

The Western industrial designer who caters to metropolitan fashion and is the self-conscious creator of designs he regards as his own, has no real counterpart in handicraft tradition. In the latter, tradition and convention are binding; habit, rather than self-consciousness, governs the approach. This is not to say that designs were static: only that changes were slower and more akin to growth, as even swift observation of the modern and historical textiles of India will show.

For two thousand years or more, Indian history has been closely bound up with her pre-eminence as a producer of textiles. Imagery of the loom is a feature of her poetic tradition. In the sacred *Vedas,* Day and Night are said to spread light and darkness over the earth as weavers throw a shuttle on the loom. In other parts of the ancient world as well, Indian fabrics were proverbial. As early as 200 B.C. the Romans used a Sanskrit word for cotton (Latin *carbasina,* from Sanskrit *karpasa*). In Nero's reign, delicately translucent Indian muslins were fashionable in Rome under such names as *nebula* and *venti textiles* (woven winds), the latter exactly translating the technical name of a special type of muslin woven in Bengal up to the modern period. The *Periplus Maris Erythraei,* a well-known Roman document of Indo-European commerce, gives to the main areas of textile manufacture in India the same locations as we would find in a nineteenth-century gazetteer and attributes to each the same articles of specialization. The quality of Indian dyeing, too, was proverbial in the Roman world, as we know from a reference in St. Jerome's fourth-century Latin translation of the Bible, Job being made to say that wisdom is even more enduring than the "dyed colors of India."

48 Pile carpet, woolen knots on silk warps and wefts. Made at Agra or Lahore. Mughal, c. 1640. 1.448 m. x 91.4 cms.

The earliest pile carpet-weaving in India dates from the reign of Akbar (1556-1605), who brought craftsmen from Khurasan in Persia and encouraged them to teach the craft. The first carpets made under these conditions are very similar to their Persian prototypes but during the reign of Jahangir (1605-27) a distinctive Mughal style developed. Jahangir was a keen naturalist with a great love of flowers which is reflected in all decorative art of the period, and especially in the borders of miniature paintings. Since carpet-weaving is a slow and conservative craft, it took rather longer for the new fashion to percolate into this field, and therefore floral carpets of this kind can usually be attributed to the reign of Jahangir's successor, Shah Jahan (1627-58).

The influence of Indian textiles in the English-speaking world is revealed in such names as *calico, sash, shawl, pajama, gingham, dimity, dungaree, bandanna, chintz, khaki*—and these are only a few among the textile terms which India has exported with her fabrics.

How did she manage to exert supremacy over such a long period? This is a question requiring answer if we are to understand Indian textiles in their historical perspective.

An initial answer is to be sought in the abundance and cheapness of raw materials. India is the original home of cotton, which was woven there in prehistoric times. Fragments of cotton cloth survive among the archaeological remains of Mohenjo-Daro, dating from the third millennium B.C., and even more significant is the fact that one fragment shows signs of having been dyed with madder, the use of which presupposes a knowledge of mordants. Until as late as the seventeenth century A.D., the Indians alone had mastered the complicated chemistry of cotton-dyeing, involving proper permeation of the fibres, as distinct from the mere application of pigments to the surface. This presented technical problems which did not apply to the dyeing of non-vegetable fibres such as silk and wool. Silk-weaving is mentioned in Indian texts at least as early as the third century B.C., but the implication is that at this time only wild silks were known. There is no evidence that the cultivated silkworm reached India from China before the first centuries of our era.

Another, perhaps equally important, clue to India's traditional textile skill is the social one of caste. It would be difficult to imagine some of the extremely complicated and laborious techniques employed outside the context of a long-established caste division of labour. We use a Portuguese word *caste* for want of an alternative, but it tends to misrepresent Indian craft organization, having, as it does, other irrelevant meanings and associations. The Indian caste system, as we are here concerned with it, combines features of both tribal and guild organization. It would be difficult to imagine any craft system more calculated to encourage specialization and the accumulation of hereditary skill. In some respects, castes had functions comparable with the craft-guilds of Europe. But whereas the latter lasted only *hundreds* of years, Indian caste conventions have survived for *thousands.* Even physique was changed by so many generations of specialized craftsmanship. This was tragically shown in the nineteenth century, when tens of thousands of Indian weavers were thrown out of work by the competition of the power-loom, and found that their hands were unfit for any other manual occupation. As a result they starved, and their deaths are recorded in the famous minute of Governor-General Lord Bentinck which began: "The bones of cotton-weavers are bleaching the plains of India. . . ."

A convenient classification of fabrics made in India for Indian use can be made on the following basis:
(1) skilled work of professional weavers and dyers who usually worked close to large market towns;
(2) articles of luxury made under court patronage or in the court tradition;
(3) folk-embroidery; and
(4) fabrics of the aboriginal tribes.

Among those in the first group are brocades, *bandanna* work or tie-and-dye, muslins and painted and printed cottons. Brocades include examples of the famous kincobs (*kimkhabs*) of Benares and Ahmedabad, woven in silk and gold and silver thread, on looms not very different from the brocade handlooms of the West. There are also *himru* brocades of mixed cotton and silk, woven primarily for Mohammedans, who were not allowed to wear garments of pure silk.

Tie-dye or *bandanna* fabrics represent one of the oldest Indian techniques. It consists in tieing tightly with waxed strings portions of a silk or cotton cloth before dipping it into the dye-vat. The strings are afterwards untied, the parts which were protected remaining uncolored to form the pattern. This technique lends itself most effectively to patterns composed of all-over spots, or circles or groups of spots. Gujarat and Rajputana are the main centers of tie-dye work. Here, the cloths are known as *chunaris* and are classified according to the number of knots in the repeat. Crude tie-dye work on coarse calico comes from many parts of India, especially Assam and the Deccan.

The so-called *ikat*-technique is another kind of tie-dye. (The widespread use in textile literature of the Javanese word *ikat* must not be allowed to conceal the fact that, as far as Asia is concerned, India is probably the source of the technique). In the making of these cloths, the warp and weft threads are dyed separately by the tie-dye process before weaving. *Ikats* are made in several parts of India; besides the well-known *patola* marriage saris of Gujarat, notable examples are the cotton shawls of Orissa and *telia rumals* of the Deccan. Traditional patterns are geometrical in kind: trellis-work, lozenges, chevrons—the special effect being the

subtle merging of adjoining colors. Some of the floral scrolls and human figures sometimes appearing in nineteenth-century designs are not traditional and may be taken as a sign of decadence.

Another kind of tie-dye cloth is the *mashru* of mixed silk and cotton, in which the warp only is tie-dyed before weaving with characteristic patterns of wavy lines.

Printing and painting on cotton are the arts for which Indian textiles have been chiefly famed abroad. The distinction between *painted* and *printed* is of more than technical interest. In the *painting* of cotton, the dyes and mordants are applied freehand with a brush. Thus each design has the character of an individual drawing, with the human and sensuous touch. In printing, on the other hand, the use of wood blocks inevitably restricts the design to repeats, and only the most skilled mastery of this art can eliminate a mechanical effect. Sometimes the two techniques were combined in the making of a single cloth.

The second classification is that of the textiles produced for the rulers and their courts, in which Persian influence is most apparent, especially in the use of a diaper: there is no evidence that it is featured at all in Indian textile design before the sixteenth century. By the middle of the seventeenth century it appears to have been completely assimilated in Indian decorative tradition.

Although the spread of Persian influence is undeniable, the term "Indo-Persian" should be applied with caution, if it is not to become meaningless. It is true that in the late sixteenth century, Persian craftsmen were encouraged to settle and to instruct Indians in the court workshops of the Mughal and Deccani rulers. As far as individual products of these workshops are concerned, the term "Indo-Persian" can often be legitimately applied. But beyond the immediate sphere of the court, Persian motifs were adapted by Indian craftsmen for their own purposes and made subservient to the more earthy and dynamic qualities of Indian art as a whole.

There have been many periods in Indian history when her craftsmen have borrowed freely from the West, beginning with the Indus Civilization of the third millennium B.C. and extending to the growth of Islamic architecture in India from the thirteenth century A.D. onwards. But each phase of borrowing has merely illustrated the encompassing personality of India; her extraordinary capacity for combined assimilation and invention. The influence of Persia in the decorative arts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is no exception.

The third classification is the embroidery, traditionally done by women and belonging to the villages. Styles are broadly regional, like the local traditions of folk-art to which they are related. In spite of commercialization in some areas and at different periods, the regional characteristics are distinctive: and even today, with Indian folk-traditions everywhere in decay, it is still possible to identify at centers of pilgrimage the satin-stitch *phulkari* embroideries of the Punjab, the chain-stitch work of Cutch and Kathiawar, cross-stitch work of Sind, and the *kantha* embroideries of Bengal. Each of these regional styles has its distinctive combinations of technique, colour and design; and each has its counterpart in commercial embroidery produced for the export market.

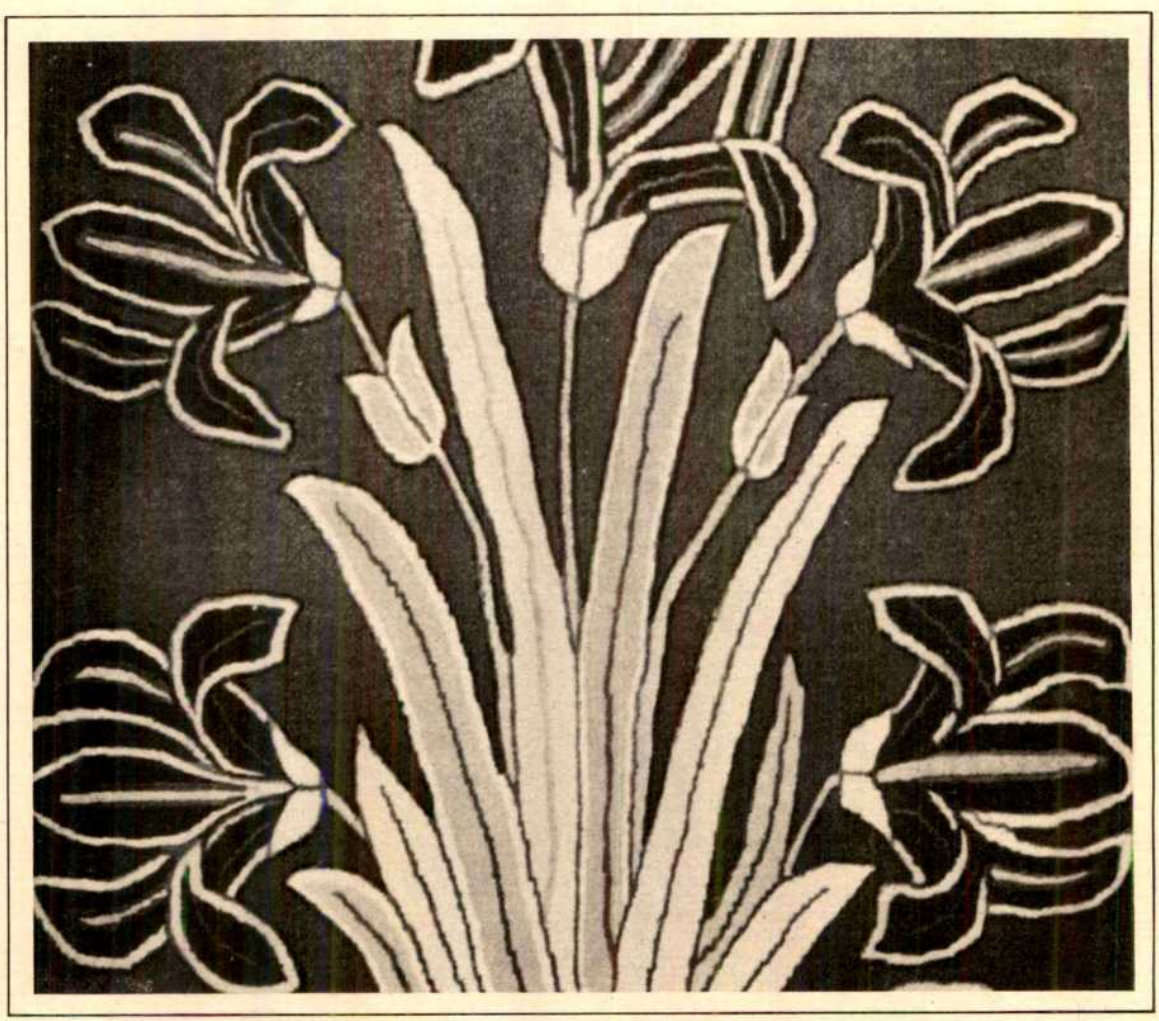
Another type of folk fabric is derived from *alponas* — the patterns which village-women of Bengal draw with rice-paste on the threshold of their dwellings. These drawings are not ornament but symbols, and an understanding of their function helps to explain much about the forms of Indian decorative art as a whole. Briefly, *alponas* are drawings required for the enactment of rituals performed by women of the village at times of crisis. The objective may be the promotion of rain, success of the harvest, or the safety of the village against epidemic: the usual underlying idea is that when mimed in ritual, the objective is more likely to be realized. When crops are ripening, for instance, the ritual is performed with the help of a drawing of a tree. This serves as a fertility symbol. The tree is drawn on the ground with white rice-paste according to established conventions of design; it then forms the center for the action of the ritual, when women sing in chorus:

> We worship the painted mandir tree
> Which promises us granaries full of rice and paddy.
> We worship the rice-paste drawing of the mandir,
> Knowing that our homeland will be rich in gold and silver. . .

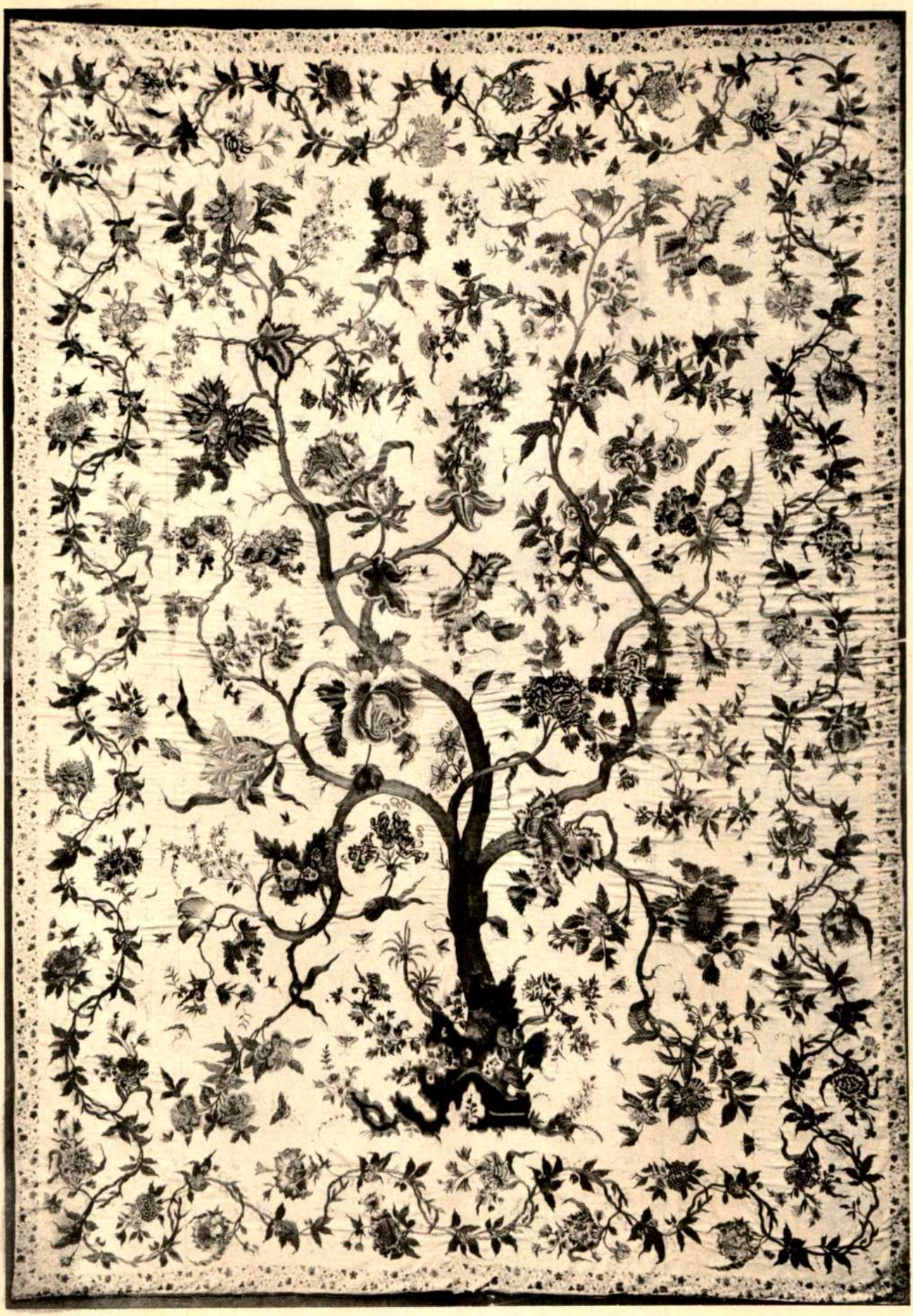
These rituals are important for an understanding of the functional basis of popular art in India. They are fundamental in the living experience of the people and reflect their whole attitude to life, giving rise to a culture rich in drama and imagination and deriving tremendous vitality from its group-character.

The folk-arts of India and the productions of primitive tribes are two worlds apart. Although folk-tradition draws on the memory of primitive rituals it has other features which presuppose a settled class-society and the coexistence of an orthodox or priestly culture.

Typical of the most primitive cultures are the weavings of the Nagas of Assam. Unlike traditional weaving in Hindu India, tribal weaving is entirely the work of women, who weave as part of their domestic duties—the true Naga housewife being expected to produce the clothing needed by her family. The loom here used is the single-heddle tension-loom of simple type, usually associated with Indonesia. The weaver sits on the ground, regulating the tension of the warps with the aid of a belt anchored around the small of the back. On the side opposite the warps are fixed to a beam, which is attached to a wall or simply to two small stakes driven into the ground. Patterns are made partly by using differently coloured warp and weft yarns, and partly by insertion of separate pieces of coloured thread at intervals in the weaving—a technique which could be described as the simplest kind of brocading or loom-embroidery. A Naga costume proclaims the wearer's social position and his prowess, and is invested with an elaborate code of meaning. —*John Irwin*



49 Bedspread, cotton, embroidered in fine chain stitch. Made in western India for the European market, c. 1740. 3.503 m. x 2.540 m.



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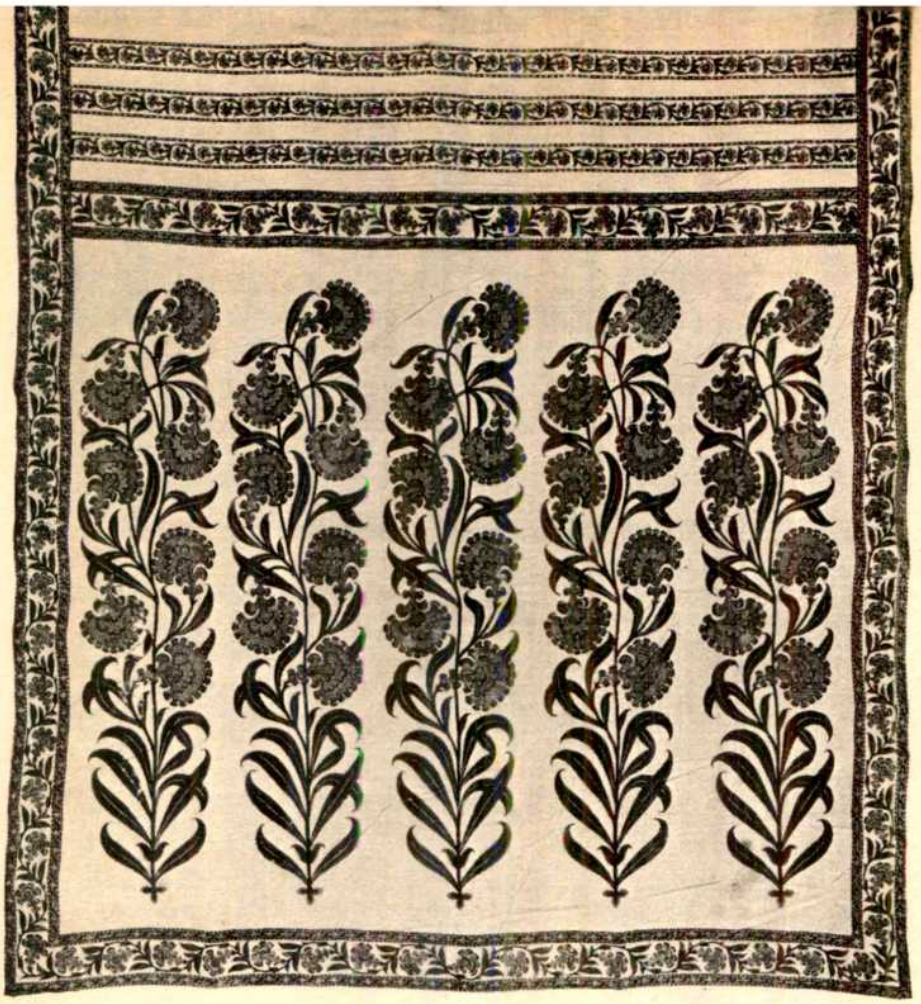


50 *Detail of a girdle, painted cotton. Made near Masulipatam, Andhra State (formerly Golconda), 17th/18th century. 5.257 m x 76.2 cms.*

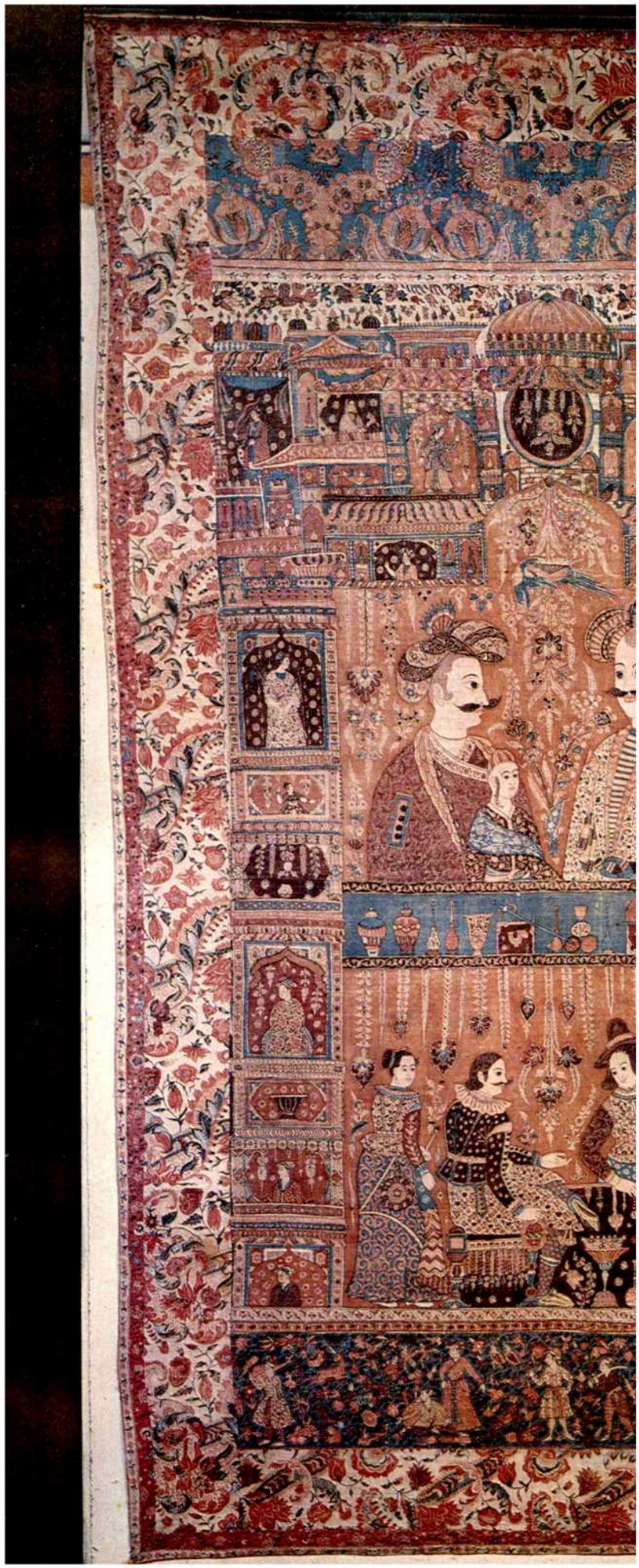
51 *Velvet carpet. Mughal; 1st half of 17th century 2.134 m. x 1.168 m.*

52 *Painted cotton fabrics exported from India to Europe during 1600-1800 A.D. have had a tremendous impact on the decorative arts of Europe. So lasting has been their influence that floral designs continue to show traces of it to this day. The special appeal of these textiles lay in their brilliant luminous colours and the fact that they were not mechanically handlocked with repeat patterns but were painted in a freehand manner.*

53 *The Fremlin Carpet, c. 1634-1644.*

The Fremlin coat-of arms is introduced into the body as well as the border of the carpet and integrated beautifully into an intricate design of animals and birds amidst vegetation.

This carpet was intended as a table-cover.



Fremlin Carpet

To possess a fine oriental carpet in England in the early seventeenth century was a mark of wealth and luxury. To possess one bearing the family coat-of-arms was an even more enviable mark of prestige, enjoyed only by those with influence in the affairs of the East India Company.

Perhaps the first to set this example was Sir Thomas Roe, James I's ambassador to the Mughal court from 1615 to 1619, who is known to have brought home "a great carpet with my arms thereon", but unfortunately there is no record of its survival beyond the fact that it was left in his will to a cousin, Sir Henry Roe. Another carpet was commissioned in 1631 by a director of the East India Company named Robert Bell, bearing his own arms together with those of the Girdlers Company, of which he had twice served as Master. This carpet survives as a treasured possession of the Girdlers Company and can be seen to-day in their newly-built hall near St. Paul's cathedral. A third carpet bearing the coat-of-arms of the Fremlin family, is now in the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

"The Fremlin Carpet", as it is called, owed its existence to William Fremlin, who served in the East India Company in India between 1626 and 1644. Born about 1608, he joined the Company's service at the age of eighteen. The records show that he was at Ahmedabad in 1628, at Agra in 1630 and 1633, and at Surat from 1634 onwards. In 1637 he was elected successor to William Methwold as President of the Council at Surat, and in the same year went on a mission to Persia, returning the following year. He left India in 1644 and died in March 1646, in his native parish of Shoreditch (now part of East London), aged thirty-eight, having made substantial bequests to charity. St. Leonard's church, in which he was buried, was rebuilt in 1736, and his tombstone, which was described as a specious marble monument situated on the South side of the altar, can no longer be traced. However, its long inscription is published by Edward Hatton, *New View of London,* 1708, I, 312, and its arms were described as: Gules, a Chevron between Three Helmets, Argent for the Crest, an Elephant.

There is no mention of the carpet in contemporary documents, but its acquisition is entirely in keeping with what we know of his character from the East India Company records. Not only was he zealous in pursuit of private trade, even to the extent of achieving notoriety among his colleagues, but on at least one occasion he was known to have been buying carpets for a patron in Goa.

The Fremlin Carpet was probably commissioned by him during the last decade of his service. It measures 19 ft. x 8 ft. was designed for use as a table-cover, which explains the long rectangular proportions of the field, and the broad borders which were intended to be seen hanging down the sides of a long Jacobean oak table. (At this period carpets were not yet in general use as floor-coverings in England: as late as 1595 even the presence chamber of Queen Elizabeth at Greenwich Palace had been contemptuously described by a foreigner as "strewed with hay".

The motifs and basic character of the design are Persian, the field being filled with beasts of prey and various mythical fauna including 'winged' deer and birds known as *simurghs,* interspersed with trees and floral devices.

The Fremlin coat-of-arms appears five times in the field and no less than twelve times in the border where it is set among conventional palmettes and scrolling stems. The woollen pile is tied in Sehna knots on warps and wefts of cotton, with three shots of weft between each line of knots. The density is about 224 knots to the square-inch. The colours used are two shades of red, two blues, two browns, two greens and one yellow.

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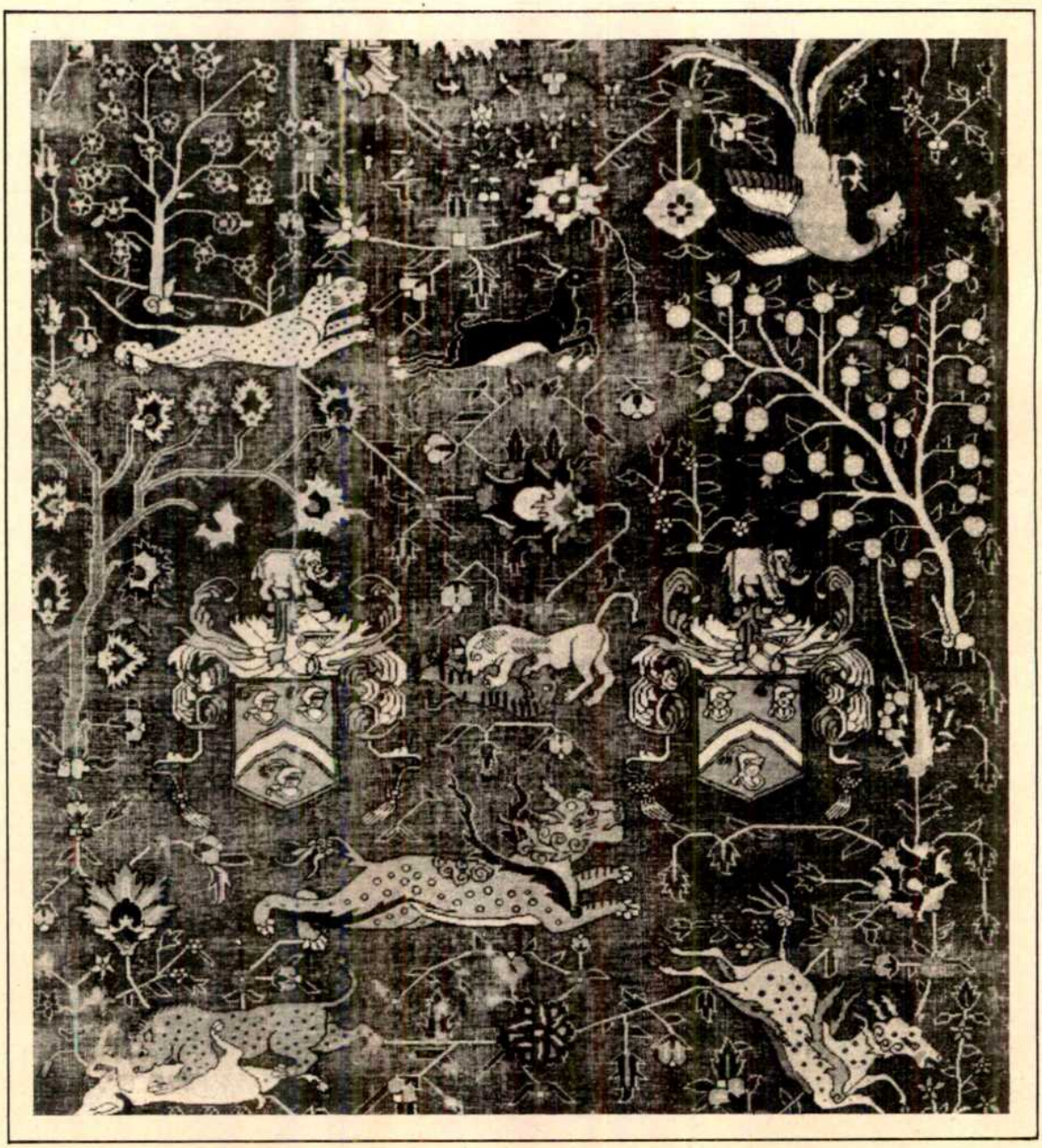
In spite of predominantly Persian features of the design, there is no doubt that this carpet was woven in India, perhaps by second or third generation immigrant Persian craftsmen now partly Indianised. The compact lyrical and interlacing rhythms characteristic of the true Persian prototype-design are here largely missing. Instead there is a symmetrical emphasis in the arrangement of the field, much freer spacing, and an added touch of drama and realism in the treatment of the animal-themes.

We have no detailed information about the terms on which Akbar had established the carpet manufactures of Agra and Lahore; but, if, as might be expected, they were modelled on the palace industries of Safavid Persia, the weavers would have enjoyed a large measure of independence in their affairs. They would have been obliged to work for the court only on command and for the execution of specific orders, being free otherwise to negotiate private commissions or to produce for the market.

The Fremlin Carpet first came to notice in 1882 when the Fremlin arms were identified and it was thought to be Spanish, being published as such by Vincent Robinson in his book, *Eastern Carpets* (London, 1882). The Fremlin association is first mentioned in an article in the *Times* of June 27th, 1913, by which time the carpet was in America. Later it found its way to France and appeared in a Paris auction in 1935, when it was bought by the Victoria and Albert Museum for £3,000. — *John Irwin*



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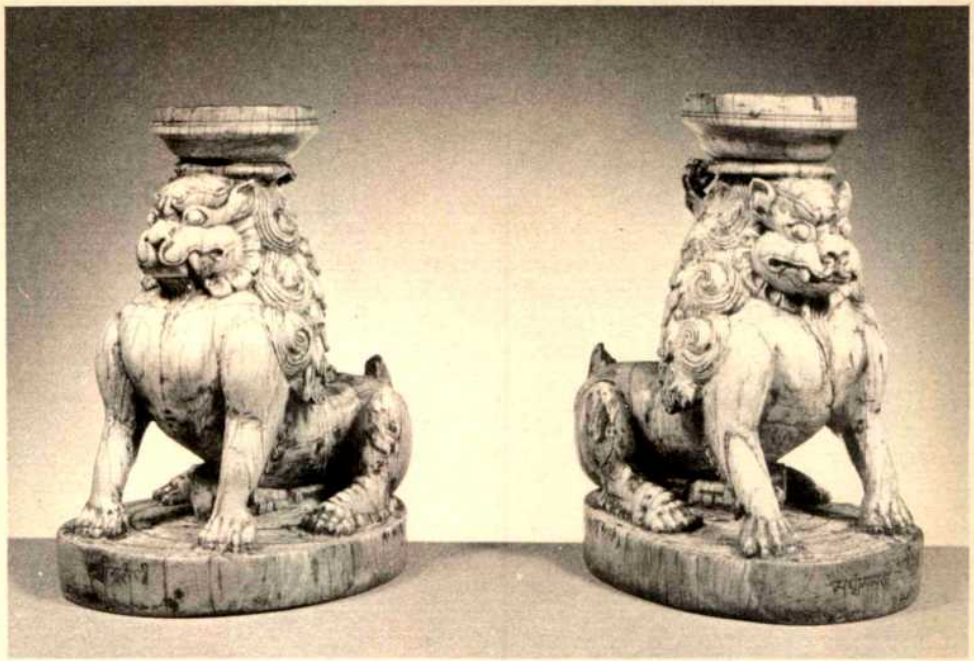


56

54 *Ornament, possibly from a royal throne. Origin and date uncertain, possibly Orissan, 13th century or later. Height 14 cms.*

55 *Throne-supports in the form of lions. Ivory. From north-east India. Pala or Sena dynasty, c. 12th century A.D.*

Originally there must have been four lions supporting the plain, square seat of the throne at the four corners. Each lion bears in proto-Bengali characters a dedicatory inscription reading shri bhagini *('Auspicious Co-heiress') and* madhyama maha *('Great Middle-born'), the precise significance in each case being obscure.*

56 *Beaker and cover. Silver. Mughal, 17th century, second half. Height 14 cms.*

Unlike many objects of European form made in India during the Mughal period, this covered beaker was intended for Indian use. Its shape has been copied by the Mughal craftsman from a Dutch or German beaker, which may have reached India in the baggage of Dutch merchants, who were lavish in distributing gifts of this sort in order to secure trading privileges from the Mughal Emperor.

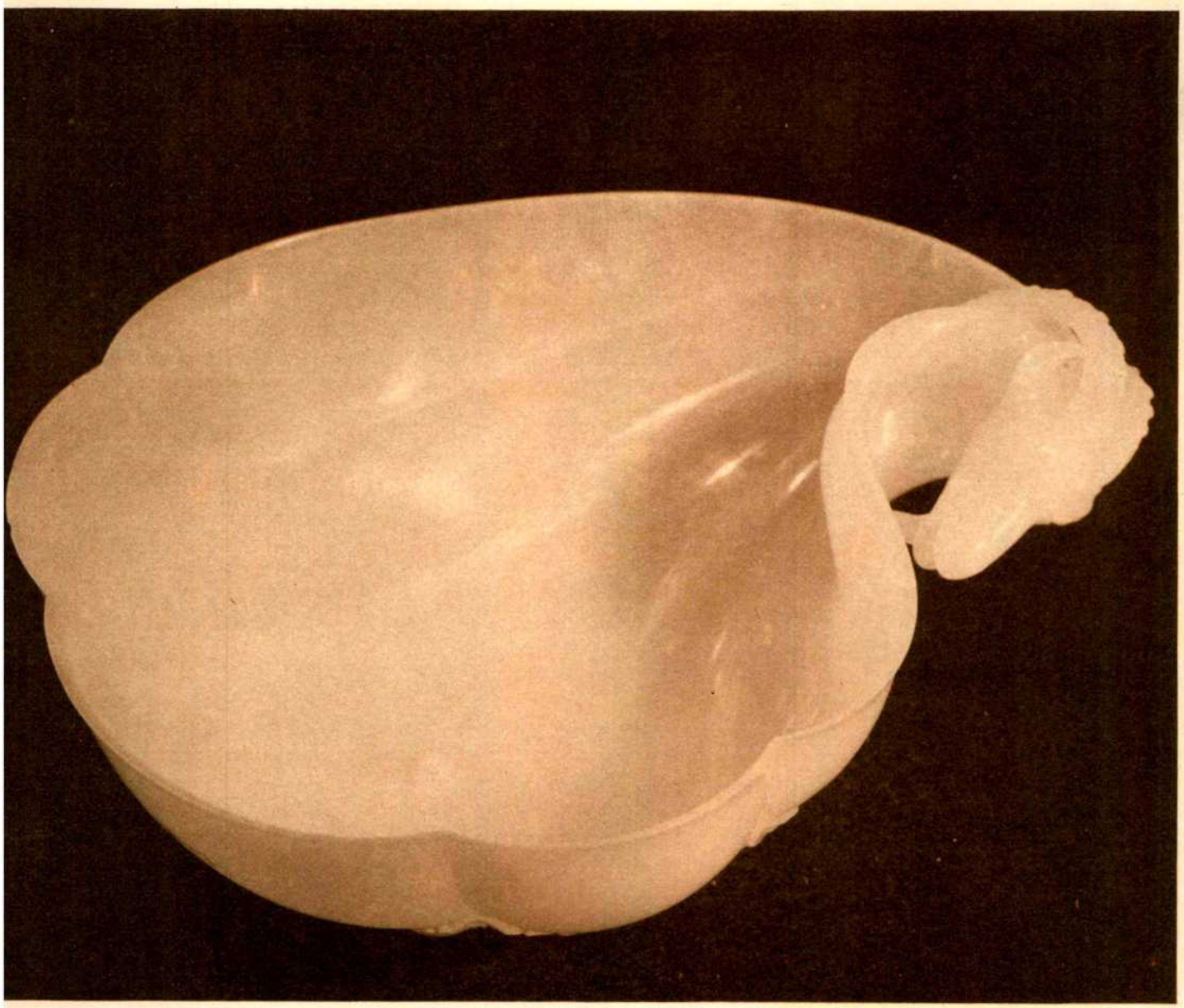
57 *Bowl. Carved crystal. Mughal, mid-17th century. Height 8.2 cms.*

This cup was probably made during the reign of Shah Jahan (1628-58) under whose lavish patronage the royal workshops brought the sumptuary arts to the highest level of excellence.

57

hah Jehan's Jade Cup

The Emperor Shah Jahan's wine-cup: jade. Inscribed and dated in the 31st regnal year, A.D. 1657. Height 5.7 cms. Length 17.8 cms. The Persian inscription is an ornate variety of the cursive Naskh script, known as Suls, and reads "Sahib-i Qiran-i Sani 1067-31." The title means The Second 'Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction'—in other words, the conjunction of two or more beneficent planets. This title was adopted by Shah Jahan in emulation of Amir Timur, who was founder of the dynasty and first holder of the title in the Mughal line. The letters are made to form a monogram, and the organisation of individual characters with such subtlety and within such a small space reflects very great skill and ingenuity. Such work was carried out at the Mughal court by specialised engravers known as muhrkan.



Shah Jehan's Jade Cup

"India" synonymous with opulence

In English literature, during Elizabethan times, the word "India" was the metaphor for imperial wealth and splendour, a metaphor conjured up by the tales of travellers who had seen with their own eyes the staggering grandeur of the Mughal Emperors.

Translucent sensuousness

Epitomising the legend of the sybaratic Mughals is the translucent sensuousness of a jade cup that delighted the Emperor Shah Jehan. As a piece of decorative art it is unrivalled among Indian jades. Milky-white in colour, its stylised shape appears to be based on the halved shell of a lobed fruit. Its asymmetrical contours elegently curve in to form the head of a wild goat. The cup stands on a base of open lotus petals from which acanthus leaves radiate to clasp the lower surface.

Monogrammed

In a cartouche on the side of the cup is delicately engraved the monogram *sahib-i qiran-i.* It means "The Second Lord of Conjunction" — a title adopted by Shah Jehan in emulation of his ancestor Timur whose supposedly favourable conjunction of planets made him the scourge of Asia. Together with the monogram is mentioned a date that corresponds to the year A.D. 1657.

Timurid Taste

Unlike China, India does not have a long history of jade carving; the Indian lapidaries favoured other hard-stones during the early and mediaeval times. The appreciation of this material came with the Mughals who inherited their taste from their ancestors in Turkestan and Eastern Persia.

The Mughal Emperors are known to have been very receptive to men of talent whose presence added lustre to their courts. Persian and Turanian men of letters, artists and craftsmen came to India. Jade carvers were probably a part of this influx.

Early jade or yashm

If jade objects were made for Akbar, they do not seem to have survived, but, a sea-captain who visited Agra in A.D. 1609 reports that Jehangir, Akbar's son and successor, owned "of *eshime* (jade, from the Persian word *yashm*) which stone comes from Cathai, one battman" (i.e. 55 pounds weight) and "of drinking cuppes five hundred, fiftie very riche, that is to say, made of one piece of ballace ruby, and also of emerods, of *eshime*, of Turkish stone and of other sorts of stones."

The Jehangiri pieces of jade, despite their varied character, do not reveal an evolved Mughal tradition in jade carving, and their form seems to depend on near Eastern and Chinese metalwork. Generally the strong metallic shapes are executed in a dark, almost black, coloured jade, the taut outlines shun prettiness or over-refinement.

Transition in taste

In Shah Jehan's reign, a transition in taste is noticeable. As marble replaces sandstone in architecture, in jade the deep murky colour of the stone is exchanged for shades verging on white. The Shah Jehani artist seeks inspiration from fruits and flowers, and his brilliantly assured hand soon transforms the organic form into melting merging stylised shapes.

Mughal synthesis

Diverse influences went into the making of this cup. In the imitation of natural objects, the cup clearly owes its motif—a split gourd—to the Chinese, but the tapering asymmetrical form is undoubtedly of Persian origin. To this is added a typically Indian device of a lotus at the base while the acanthus leaves that clasp the under-side are unquestionably from Europe. Another element for which a European source seems likely, is the handle of the cup, for, after the rediscovery of classical grotesque in Italy, scrolling decoration terminating in heads of animals and monsters had become commonplace motifs. Such art forms could have come to India through the engravers' art or the actual presence of European artists and craftsmen who sought their fortunes at the Mughal court. The head of the goat, executed with astonishing fidelity to nature, is surely a study from life — a characteristic seen in the animal art of India from the earliest times.

This cup reflects a synthesis of Persian, Indian, Chinese and Western elements marked by sensitive naturalism. It represents the formal and eclectic qualities of Mughal Art.

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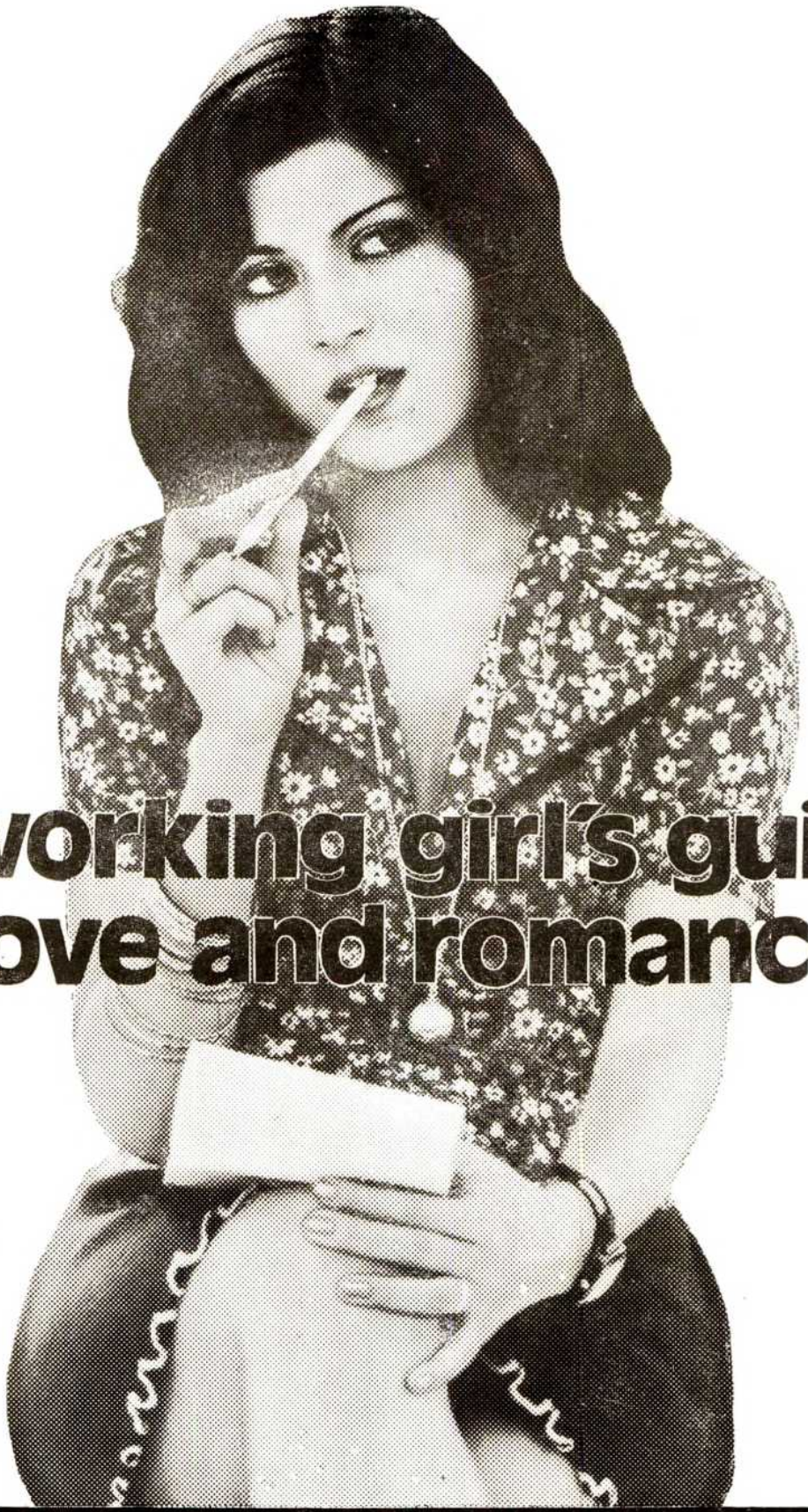

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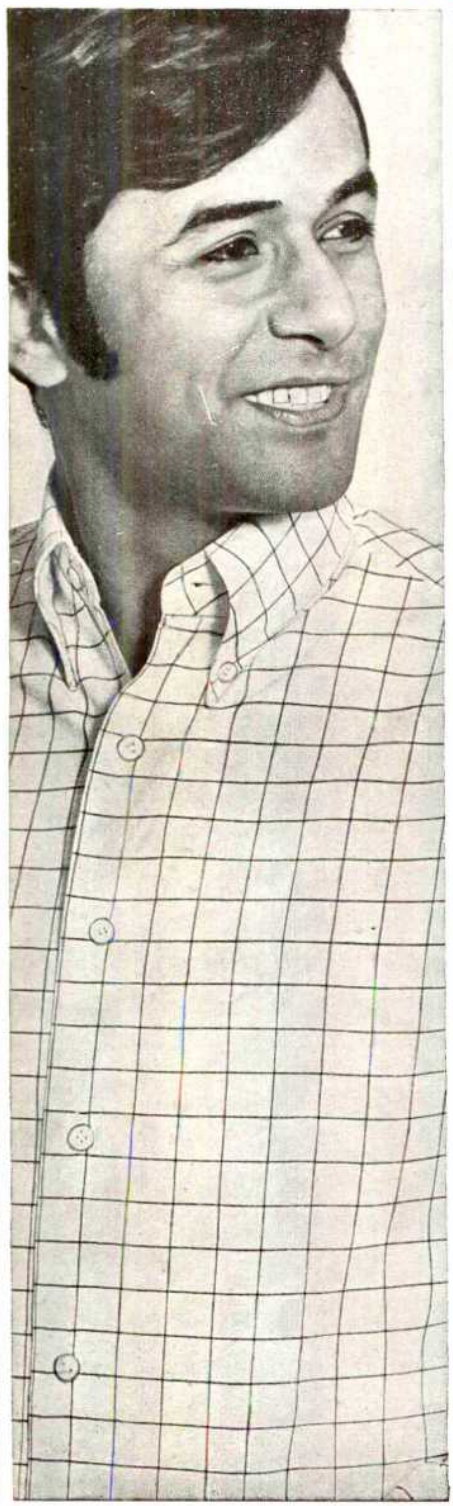

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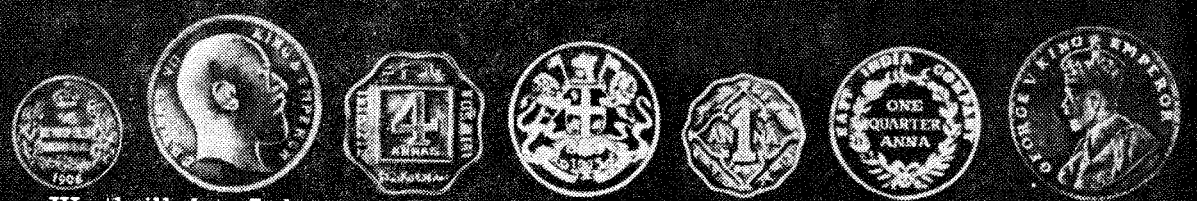

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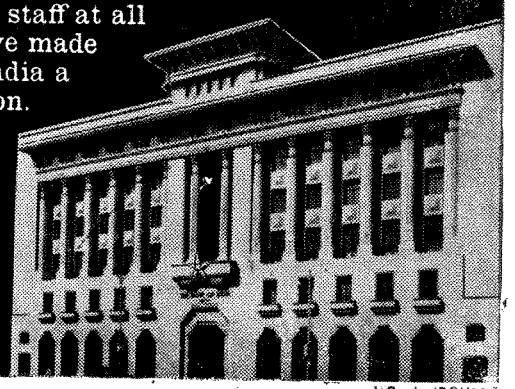

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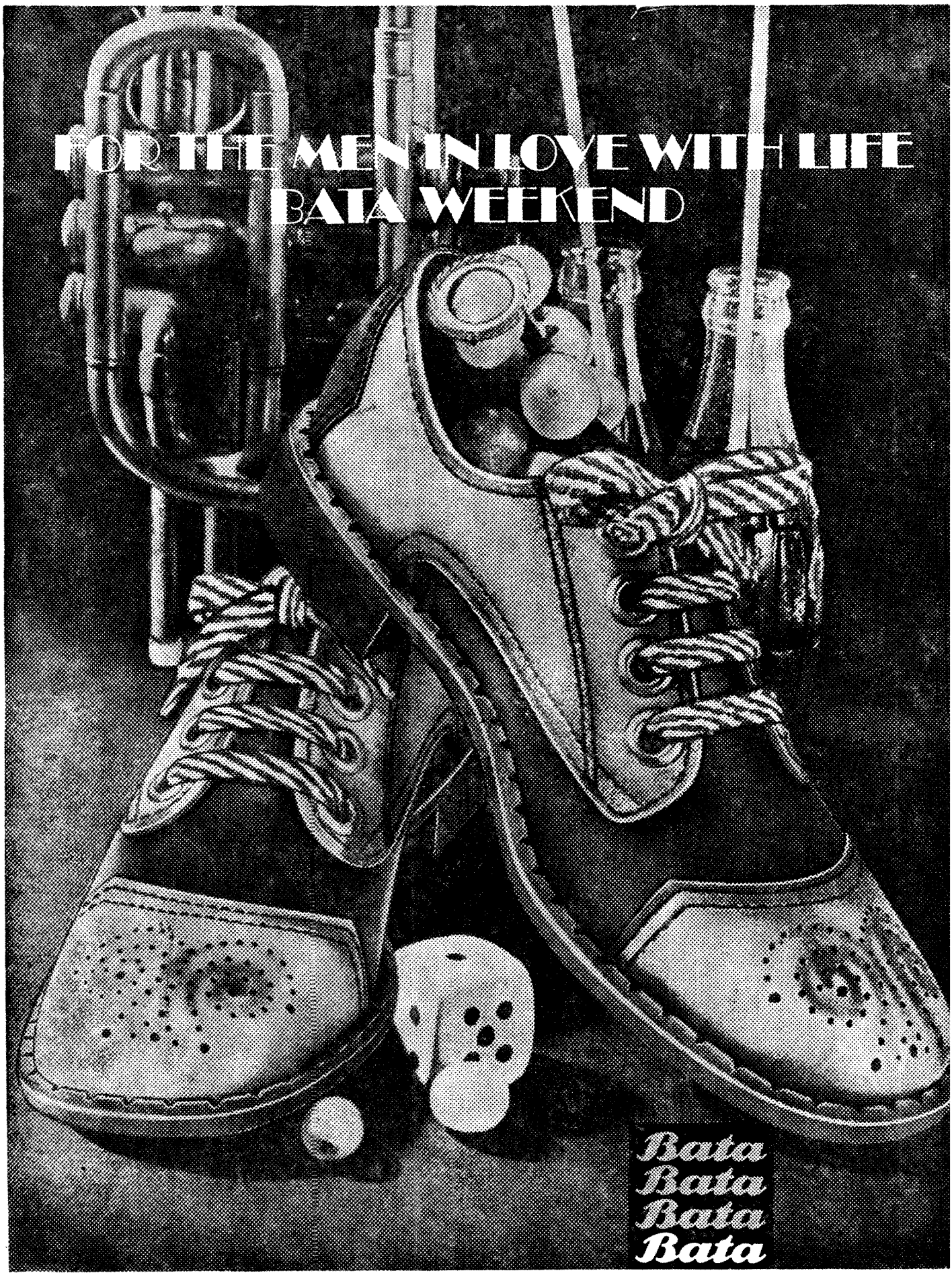
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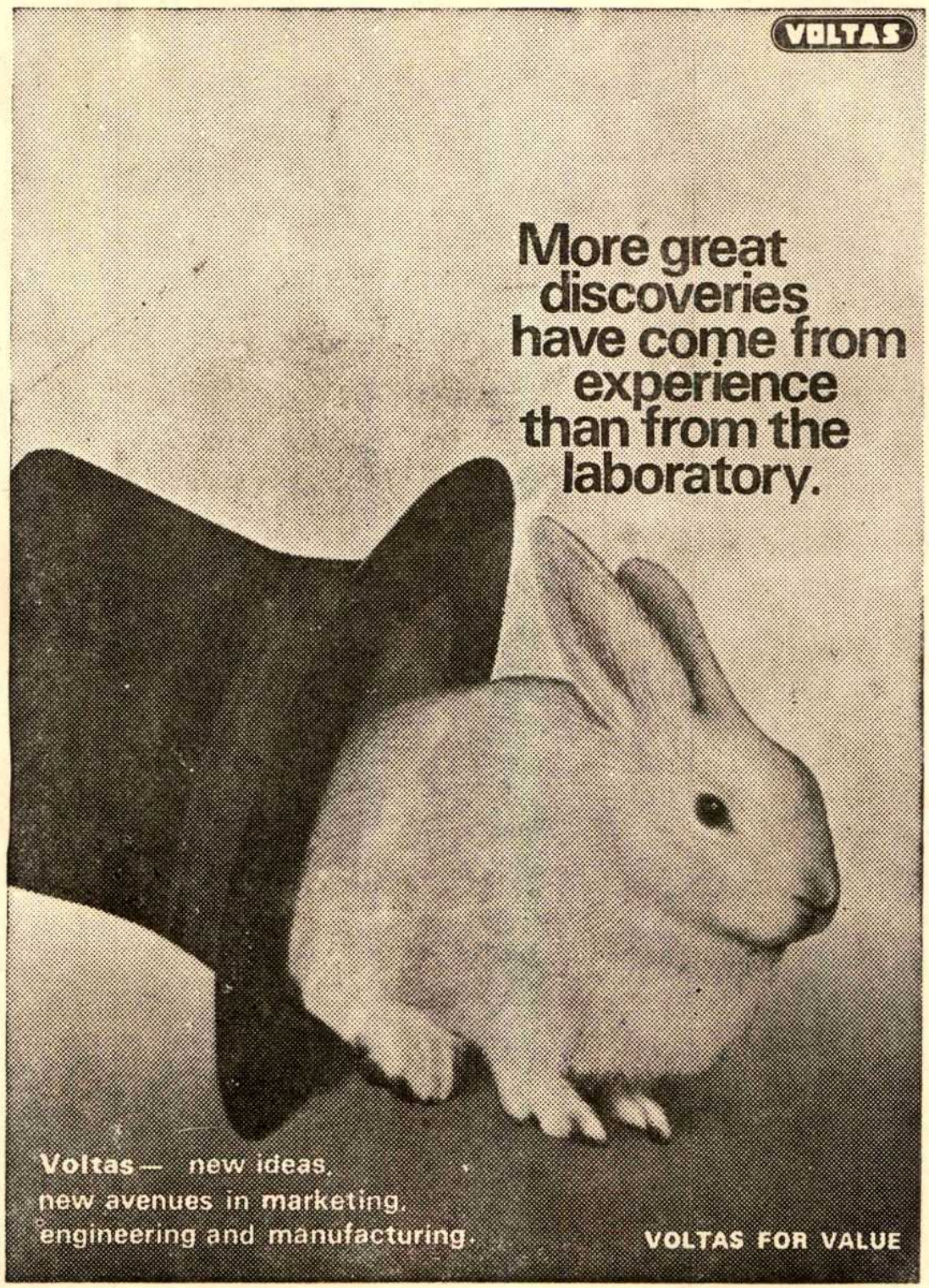
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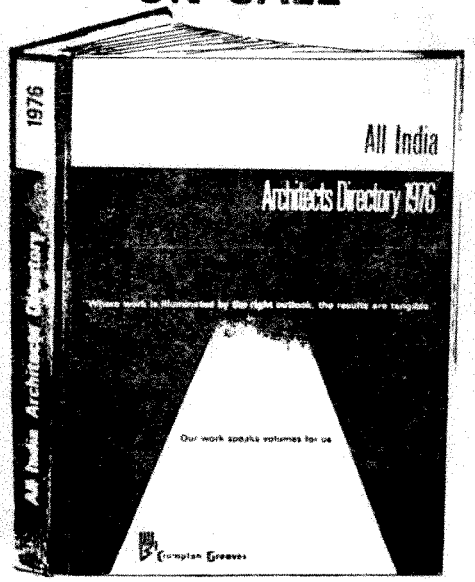

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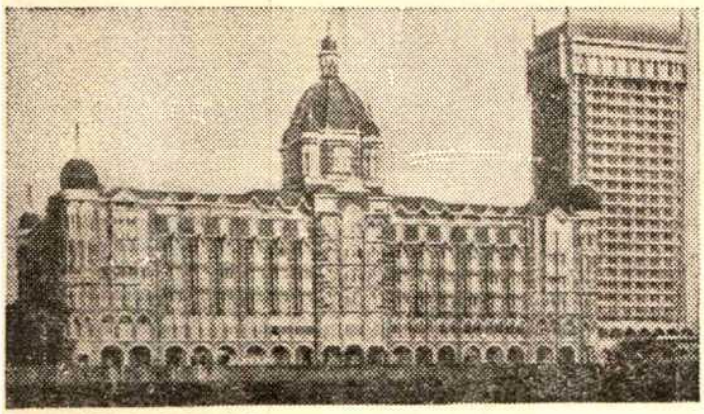

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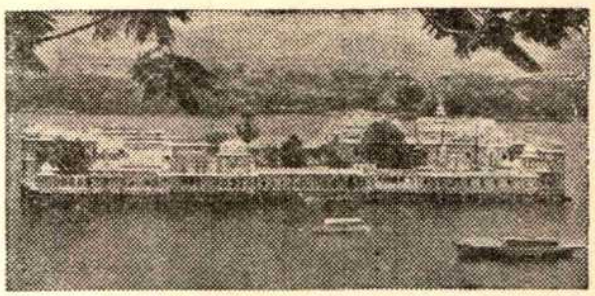

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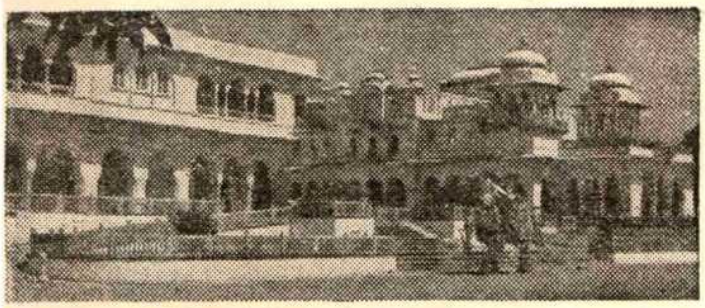

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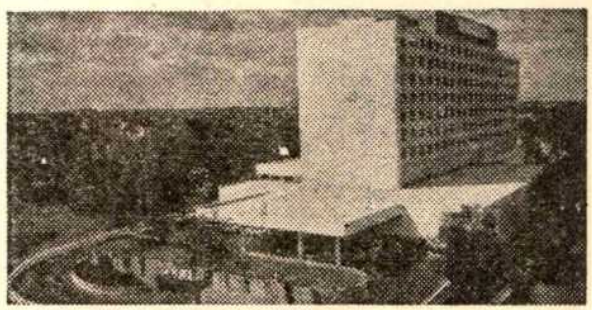

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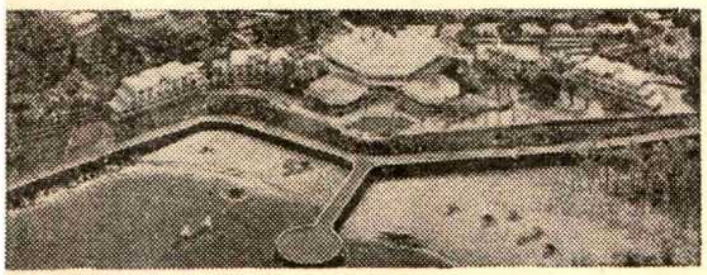

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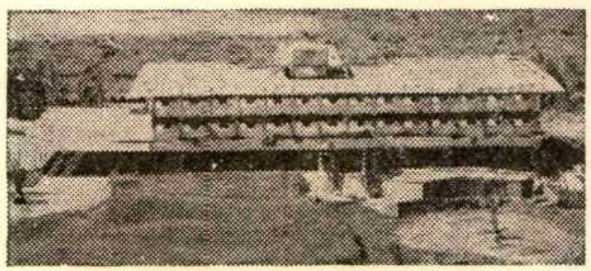

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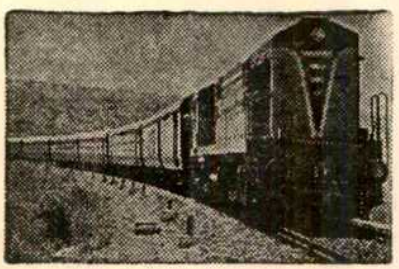

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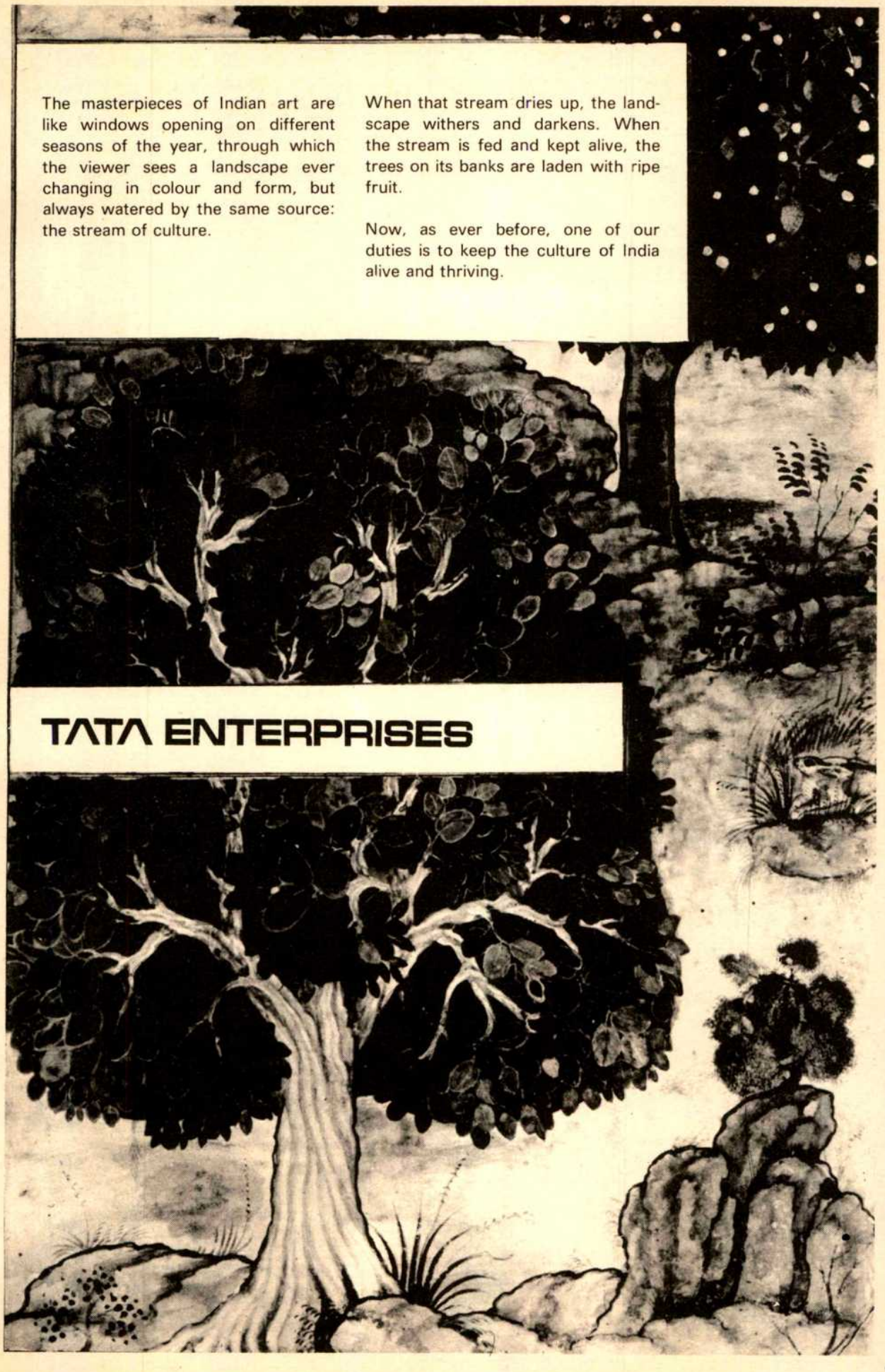

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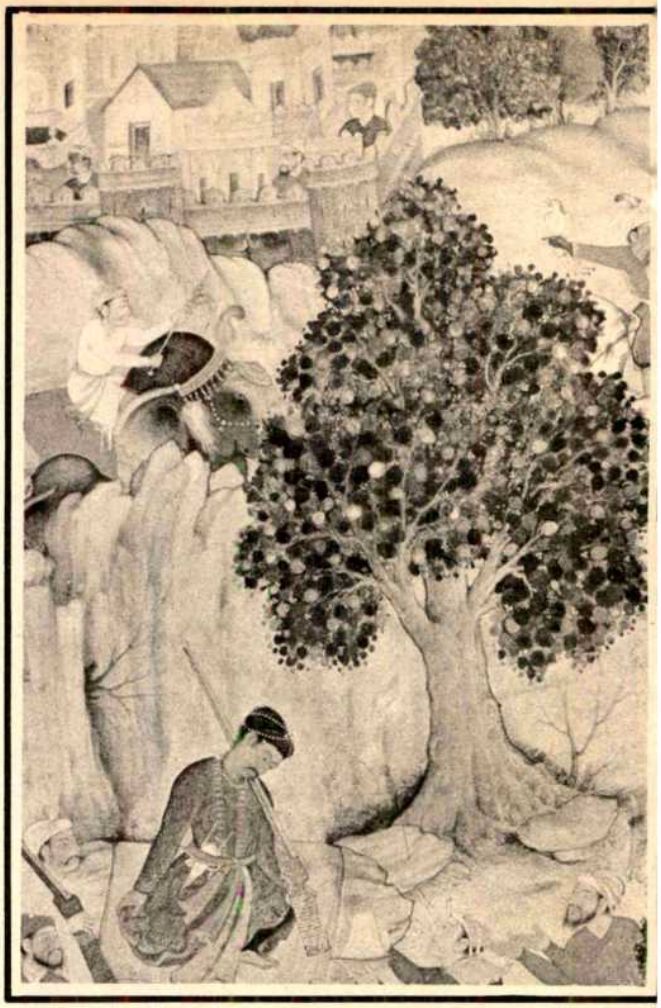

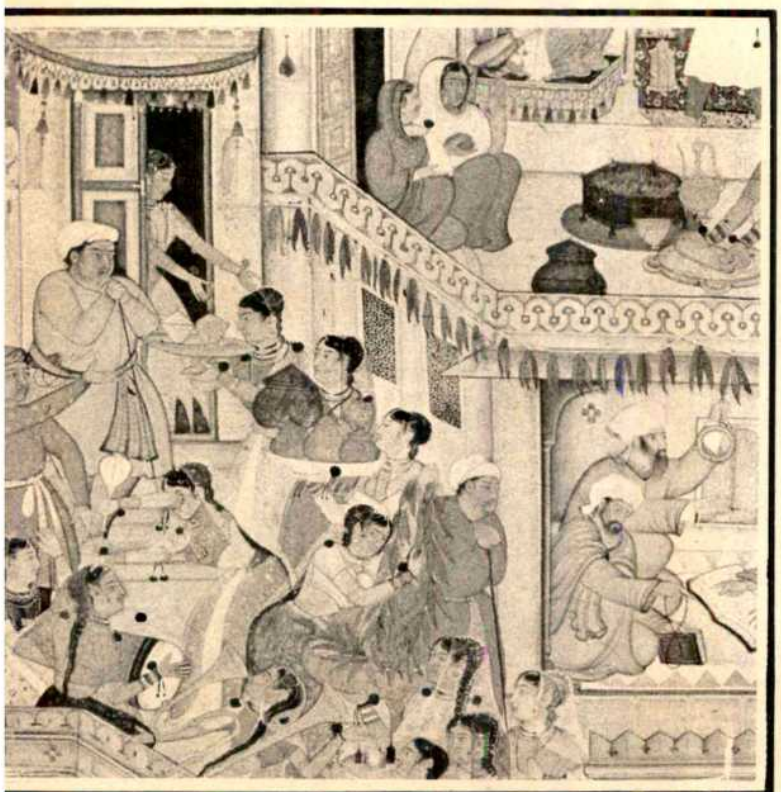

MAY YOU HAVE....
Enough happiness to keep you sweet,
Enough trials to keep you strong,
Enough sorrow to keep you human,
Enough hope to keep you happy;
Enough failure to keep you humble,
Enough success to keep you eager,
Enough friends to give you comfort,
Enough wealth to meet your needs;
Enough enthusiasm to look forward,
Enough faith to banish depression,
Enough determination to make each day
better than yesterday.

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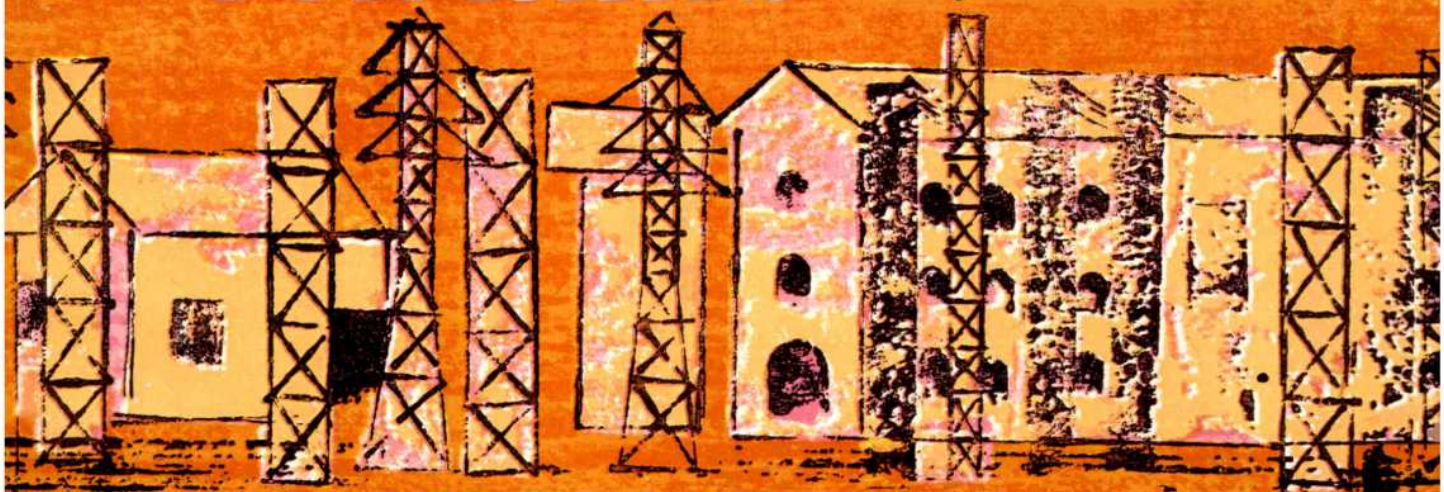

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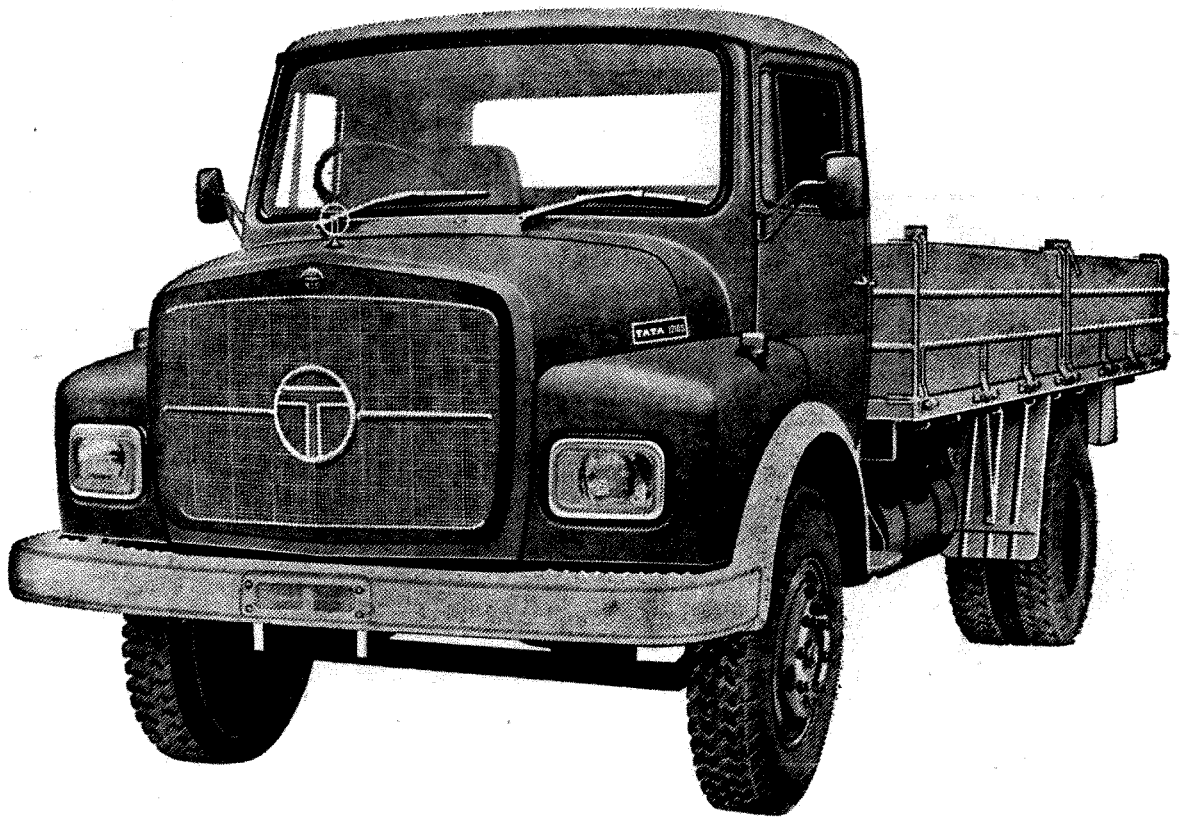
TATA 1210 S
SEMI-FORWARD CONTROL TRUCK
WITH NEW GB 30 GEAR BOX



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with the feeling of
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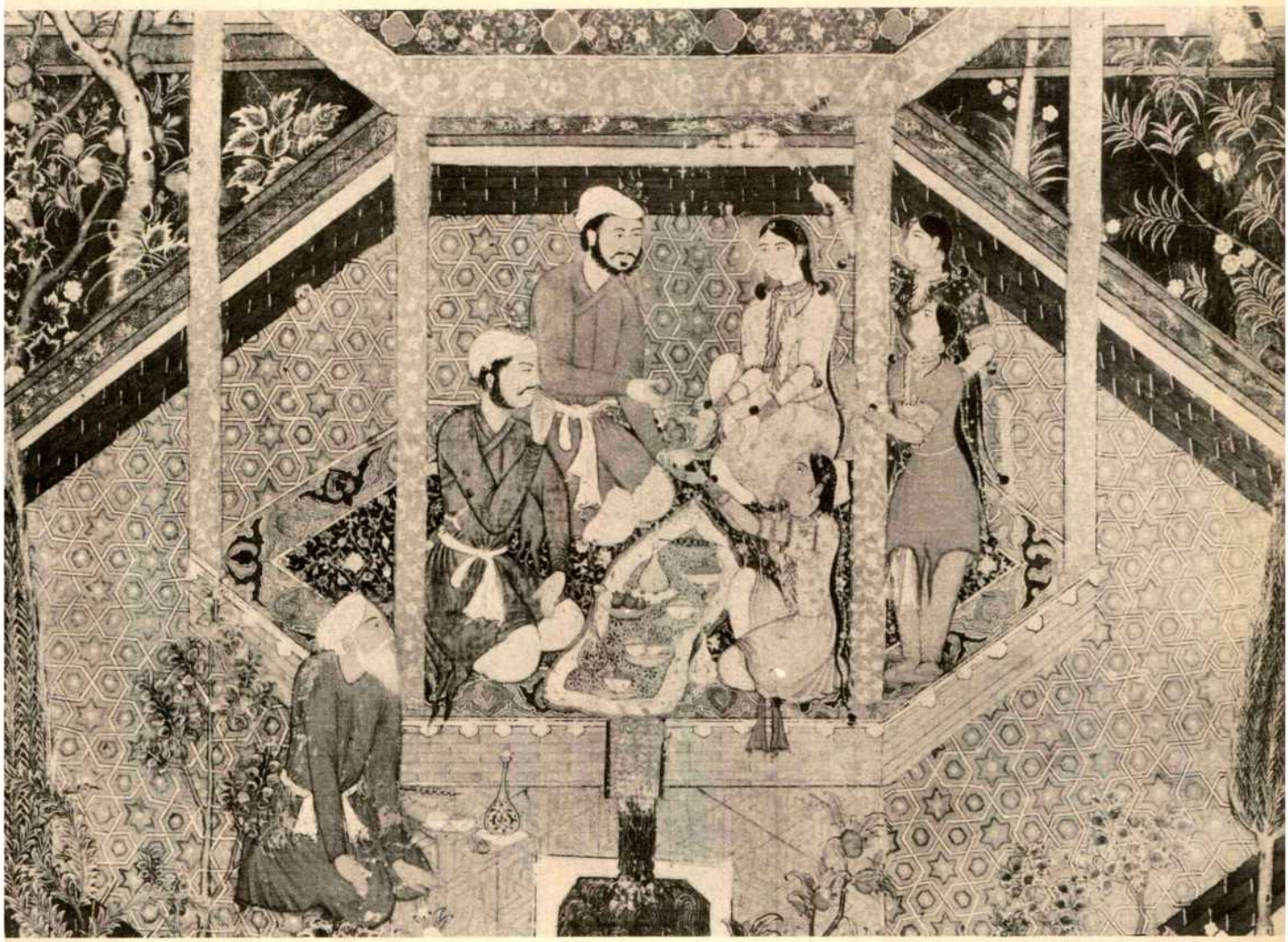
to art its true power."
—Millet



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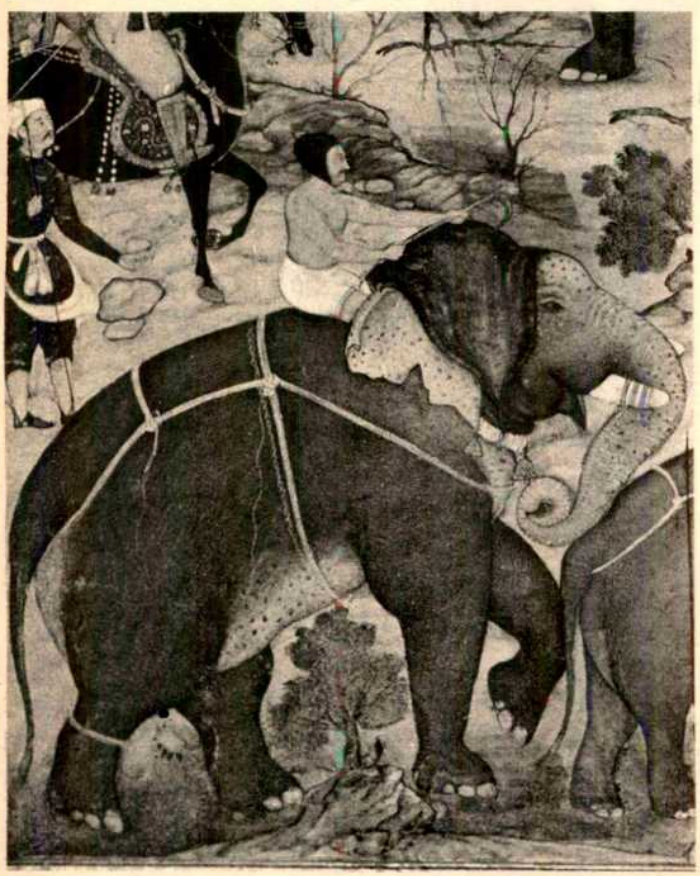

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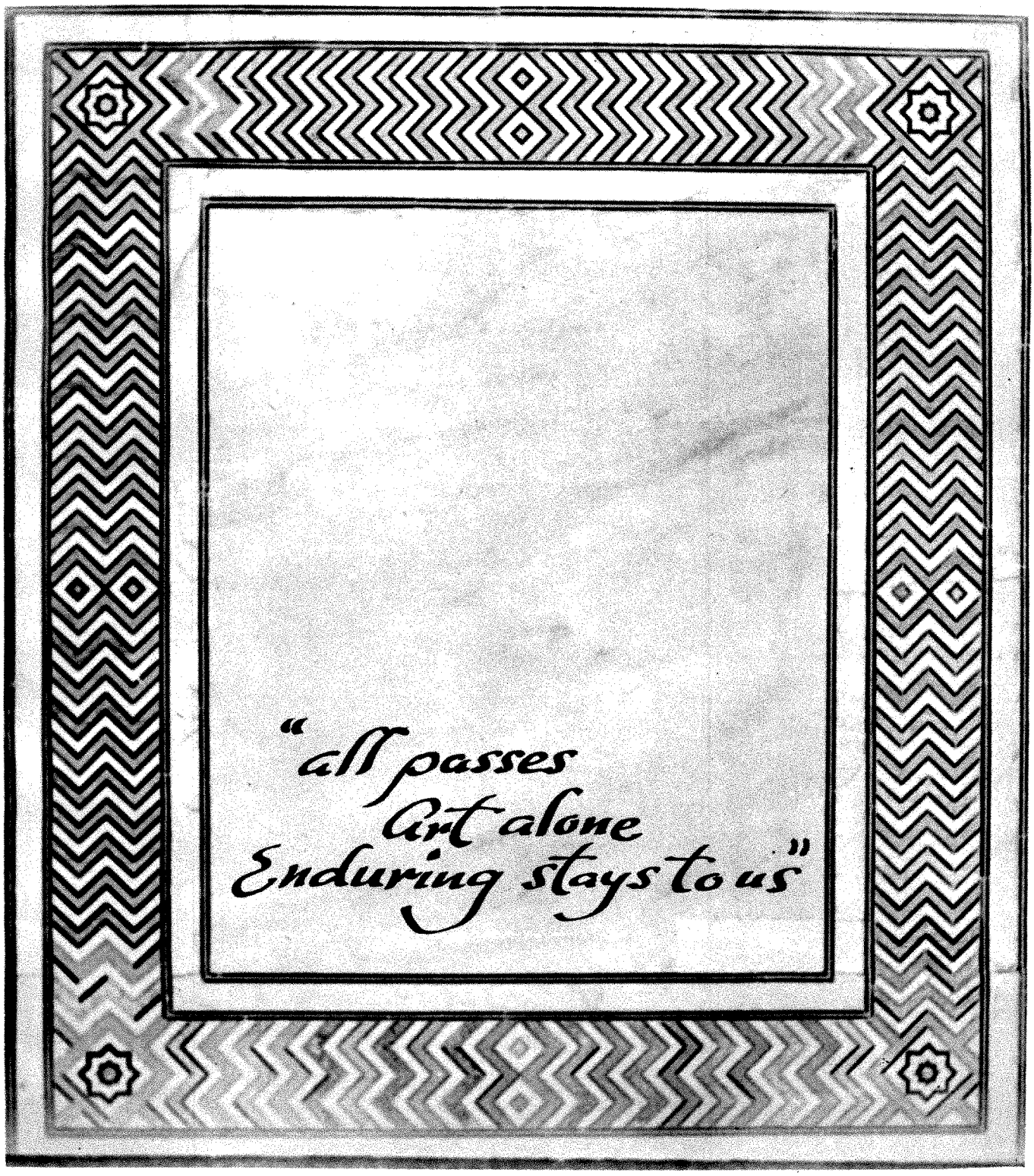

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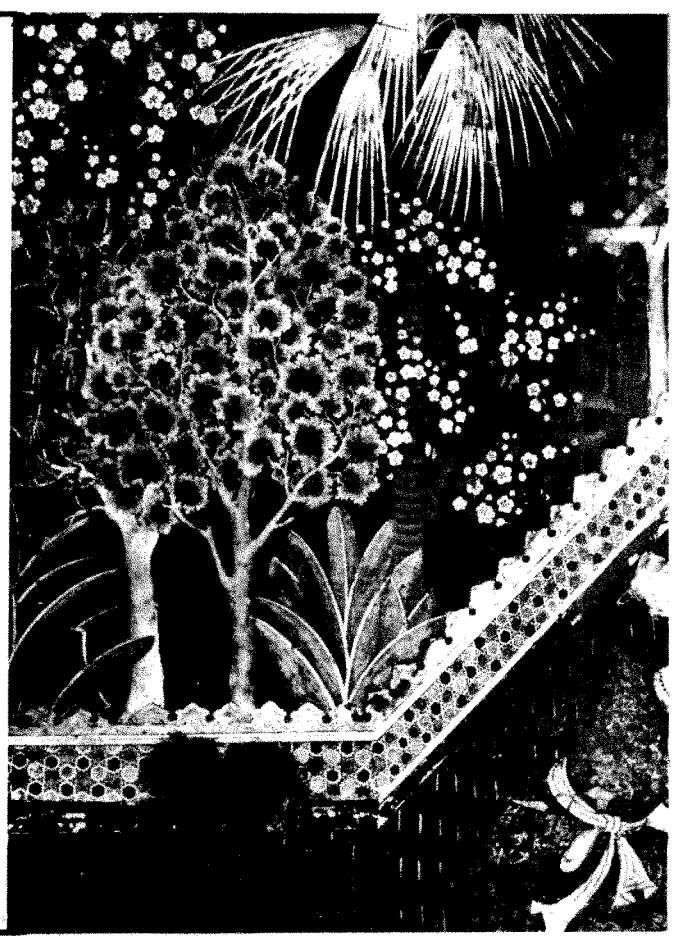

THE TIMES OF INDIA ANNUAL 1977

125 YEARS AGO

To a generation that has grown up in the jet age of manned space flights and Mars landings, travelling by 'palankeen' would be an amusement at a fun-fair.

Our ancestors, however, had very little choice, as is evident from **"Travels In Early Days of the Raj"** by R.P. Gupta who describes the pleasures or otherwise of commuting over a hundred years ago.

This year's annual also includes—

New Treasures of National Art by Niharranjan Ray

Looking Back on Project Tiger—A Balance Sheet by M. Krishnan

Meghalaya's Manifold Charm and Beauty by N.K. Rustomji

The Ethos of The South Indian Bronze by V.S. Thirumalai

Heady Magic of Handicrafts by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

Digging Up The Past—Some Recent Archaeological Finds by B.K. Thapar.

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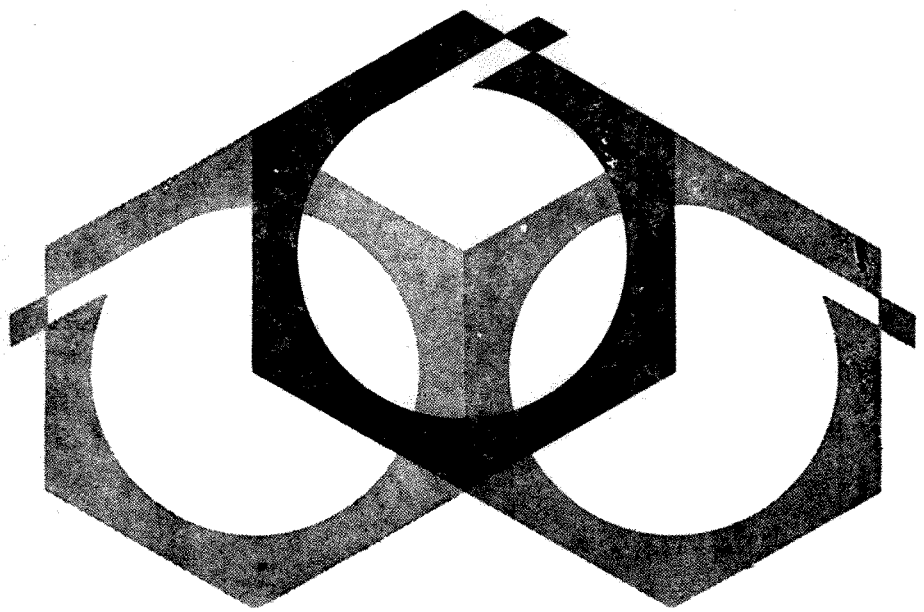

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but just some way to live.

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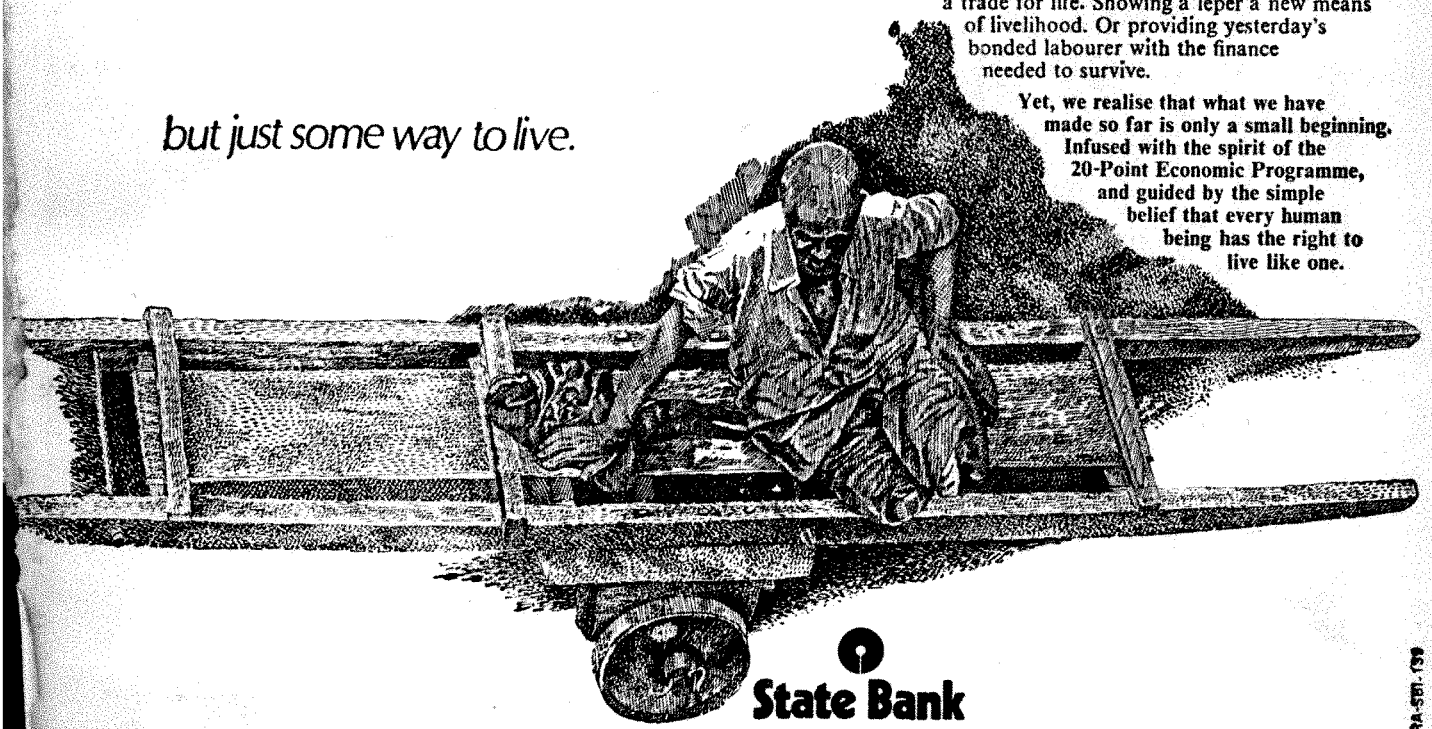
Our help isn't always monetary. It's a State Bank employee spending time and patience. Lending encouragement when it's needed. (Often that helps much more than lending cold cash.) It's work during office hours or beyond. It may be equipping a blind man with a trade for life. Showing a leper a new means of livelihood. Or providing yesterday's bonded labourer with the finance needed to survive.

Yet, we realise that what we have made so far is only a small beginning. Infused with the spirit of the 20-Point Economic Programme, and guided by the simple belief that every human being has the right to live like one.



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March	1969 (Vol. 22 No. 2)	— Bhitargaon
Sept.	1969 (Vol. 22 No. 4)	— Forgotten Arts of India
Dec.	1969 (Vol. 23 No. 1)	— Indian Terracottas
March	1971 (Vol. 24 No. 2)	— Bamiyan
June	1971 (Vol. 24 No. 3)	— Begram Ivories
Sept.	1971 (Vol. 24 No. 4)	— Persepolis
Dec.	1971 (Vol. 25 No. 1)	— Wonder & Beauty of Hittite Civilisation
June	1972 (Vol. 25 No. 3)	— Bagh Caves
Dec.	1972 (Vol. 26 No. 1)	— Landscape Architecture & Gardening of the Mughals
March	1973 (Vol. 26 No. 2)	— Mohini Attam
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Sept.	1973 (Vol. 26 No. 4)	— Ottoman Turkish Miniature
Dec.	1973 (Vol. 27 No. 1)	— Cambodia
March	1974 (Vol. 27 No. 2)	— Bangla Desh Heritage
June	1974 (Vol. 27 No. 3)	— Buddhist Art in Licchavi Nepal
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March	1976 (Vol. 29 No. 2)	— Samarkand Architecture
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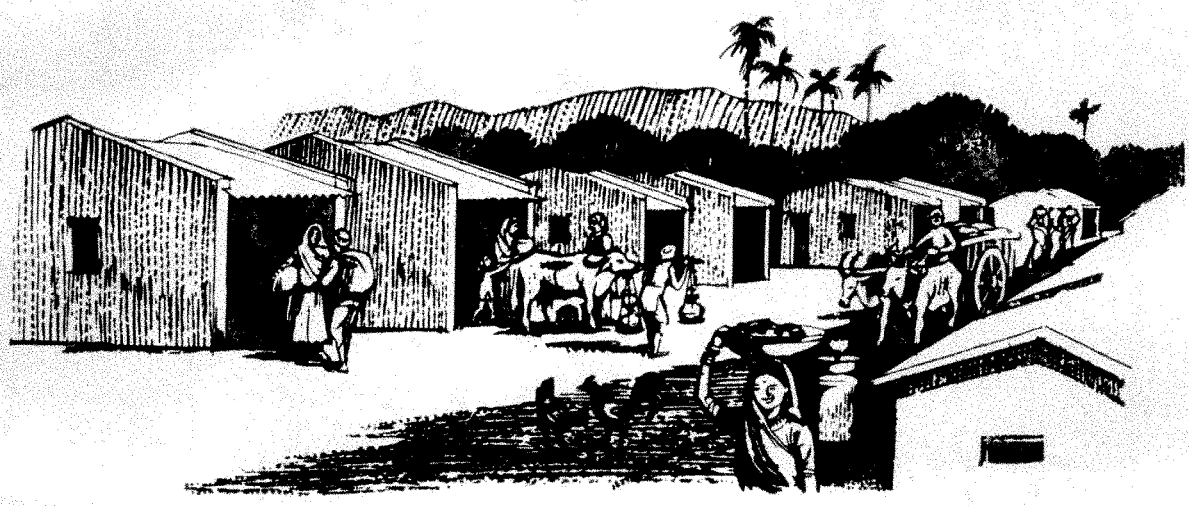
As one village died, a new one was born.



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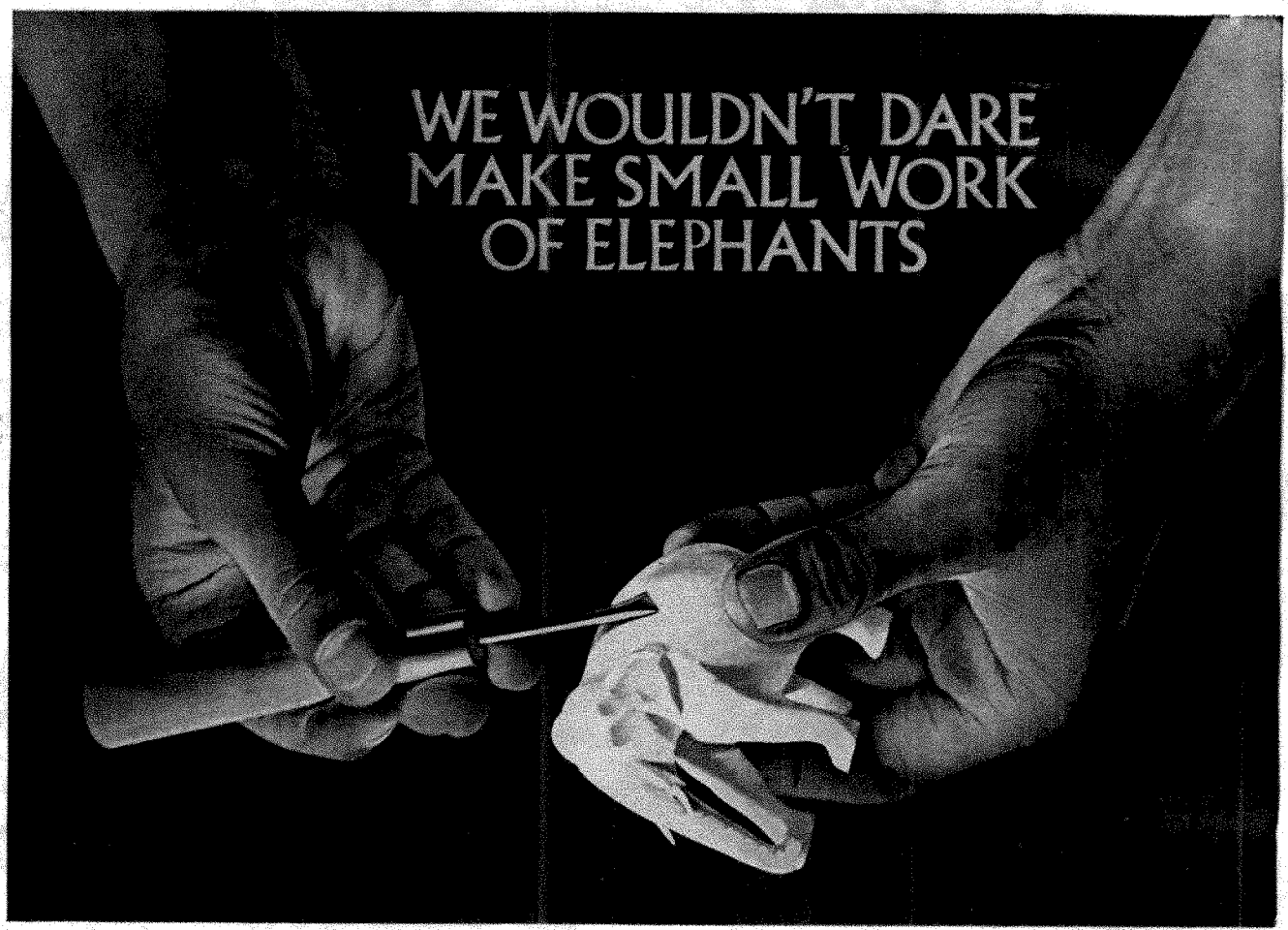

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